

COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC STUDIES IN CULTURAL CONTEXTS 1

Cultural Conceptualisations and Language

Farzad Sharifian



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Cultural Conceptualisations and Language

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Volume 1

Cultural Conceptualisations and Language. Theoretical framework
and applications
by Farzad Sharifian

Cultural Conceptualisations and Language

Theoretical framework and applications

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John Benjamins Publishing Company

Amsterdam / Philadelphia



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sharifian, Farzad.

Cultural conceptualisations and language : theoretical framework and applications /
Farzad Sharifian.

p. cm. (Cognitive Linguistic Studies in Cultural Contexts, ISSN 1879-8047 ; v. 1)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Language and culture. 2. Cognitive grammar. I. Title.

P35.S49 2011

306.44--dc22

2010051881

ISBN 978 90 272 0404 2 (Hb ; alk. paper)

ISBN 978 90 272 8718 2 (Eb)

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John Benjamins Publishing Co. · P.O. Box 36224 · 1020 ME Amsterdam · The Netherlands
John Benjamins North America · P.O. Box 27519 · Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 · USA

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Acknowledgements

I have learnt a great deal from those with whom I have worked over the years and gratefully acknowledge my debt to them. I also wish to thank the many people who have in one way or another played a part in this book. Here I will just mention a few names. I would like to thank Professor Roslyn M. Frank for her encouragement, support and much appreciated advice throughout the development of ideas and research that is covered in this book. The book has also greatly benefited from her constructive review and her very helpful comments. I would also like to thank Professor Ian G. Malcolm for his generous support and guidance since my arrival in Australia in 1998. Professor Ning Yu deserves a special word of thanks for his support and encouragement, as well as his constructive comments on this monograph. I would also like to thank Professor Gary B. Palmer for inspiring me to pursue my thinking and research in the area of language, culture and cognition. I am greatly indebted to Dr Farhad Moshfeghi, my first academic supervisor, who generously guided and supported me during the earlier years of my academic life as I began to lay down the foundations of my thinking about language and thought.

I am also grateful to John Benjamins Publishing Company, in particular Ms Hanneke Bruintjes, Acquisition Editor, for their support and enthusiasm during the preparation of this book. I would like to acknowledge the help that I received from my research assistants, Ms Melanie Burns and Ms Susan Stanford, whose comments and ideas about how to put this book together were of significant help.

I would like to acknowledge the financial and academic support of Monash University and Edith Cowan University, in particular the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics at Monash University. I also received financial support from the Australian Research Council twice throughout the conduct of research that is included in this book (ARC DP and Australian Postdoctoral Fellowship [project number DP0343282], and ARC DP [project number DP0877310]).

The following articles and book chapters were used, either in part or as whole, as the main basis for writing this book. However, they have been revised, expanded, merged and rewritten to form a coherent monograph. Some sections of the book have not been published. I would like to thank the publishers of these articles/book chapters for giving me the permission to use them in writing this book.

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Preface

This book covers the theoretical framework of cultural conceptualisations, cultural cognition and language which I have been developing since 2001. It draws on a multidisciplinary background in theoretical fields such as cognitive psychology, cognitive linguistics, cognitive anthropology, distributed cognition, complexity science and anthropological linguistics, to enhance our understanding of the ways in which language, conceptualisation and culture interact with each other. The framework presented in this book contributes in turn to each of these theoretical fields. The transdisciplinary framework provides a disciplinary synthesis by drawing on analytical tools and theoretical notions that previously have often been explored in separation from each other. In addition, the model benefits from and contributes to several areas of applied linguistics including World Englishes, intercultural communication, English as an International Language and cross-cultural pragmatics.

Figure 1, which follows this preface, captures the multidisciplinary nature of the model discussed in the book. The overlapping of the circles at the bottom of the figure are meant to reflect the natural common ground that exists between these theoretical disciplines. The points of intersection between the sub-disciplines at the top are displayed by placing them against a common background frame, which is collectively identified as ‘areas of applied linguistics’.

Although the analytical tools that I have used as the basis for the development of this model (such as the notion of ‘schema’) were borrowed from these disciplines, they have been revisited and expanded in the light of my developing views about the nature of group-level cultural cognition. The ultimate goal of this work has been to establish a framework for the study of language as it is grounded in cultural cognition, which is a missing link in the interface between these disciplines.

This theoretical framework has also been influenced by the work of like-minded colleagues who have emphasised the grounding of language in culture and cognition, notably Professor Roslyn M. Frank and Professor Ning Yu, the other editor of this book series.

Early in the history of the development of cognitive linguistics as a sub-discipline, there was an increasing awareness that cognitive linguists had much in common with cognitive anthropologists, since both groups dealt with their main

area of focus (namely, language and culture, respectively) as cognitive systems. However, this perception soon faded, perhaps because many working in the field of cognitive linguistics did not fully recognise just how closely culture interacts with and shapes language and conceptualisation. Fortunately, a group of cognitive linguists has emerged, sometimes referred to as 'second generation cognitive linguists', who, like myself, are seriously exploring language and cognition in the context of culture. This development should reinforce the interrelationship between cognitive linguistics and cognitive anthropology.

The book includes several chapters which illustrate the application of the theoretical model of cultural conceptualisations to areas such as dialectal variation (in Aboriginal English in particular), intercultural communication and intercultural pragmatics, political discourse, and English as an International Language. These studies indicate the potential applicability of the theoretical framework I have developed and show how it can produce a fine-grained analysis of language by exploring the grounding of language in cultural conceptualisations and thence eventually in cultural cognition.

I hope my work will generate similar studies across a variety of languages and cultures and allow for the investigation of as yet uncharted domains. A merit of this book is that while it is an exercise in theoretical linguistics, it also reveals how the theoretical framework has developed through its application to a variety of areas. Scholars and practitioners in applied linguistics often complain about the irrelevance of the available theoretical frameworks in pure linguistics to their areas of inquiry. I hope this book will bridge this divide and prove to be of interest to scholars with theoretical as well as applied orientations.

While the theoretical framework that I have presented in this book owes much to my multidisciplinary academic background and my readings in areas such as psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, cognitive anthropology, cognitive psychology, sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, I have also drawn on my personal linguistic and cultural resources. I grew up in Iran speaking Persian as my mother tongue, and learned English as my second language. In 1998 I migrated to Australia where I continued my studies and undertook extensive fieldwork and research on a number of topics. While pursuing a major theoretical undertaking, that is, developing the theoretical framework presented in this book, I undertook several applied projects, for example, an exploration of the conceptual basis of Aboriginal English as well as an examination of the cultural-conceptual basis of Persian pragmatics. Throughout the work that I have carried out in recent years I have always felt that my theoretical work and my applied research have significantly reinforced each other and have enriched my understanding of each undertaking. I very much hope this book reflects this.

I must add here that my Australian experience, collectively understood, exposed me to various systems of cultural conceptualisations, including that of Aboriginal Australians, making me more and more conscious of the cultural conceptualisations that characterise Iran, the society in which I grew up. I have been privileged in having had life experiences that have given me access to more than one language and culture, enabling me to appreciate the intricate interconnection between language, culture and conceptualisation.

It gives me great pleasure that I have had the opportunity of writing this book and sharing the experiences that have acted as a catalyst for the development of the ideas and research that are included here. Finally, in presenting the research model of this book, Chapters 1 to 3 to some extent revisit key concepts and terms with the goal of extending and deepening the scope of the overall theoretical framework. A certain degree of reiteration of key concepts across the chapters is intentional.

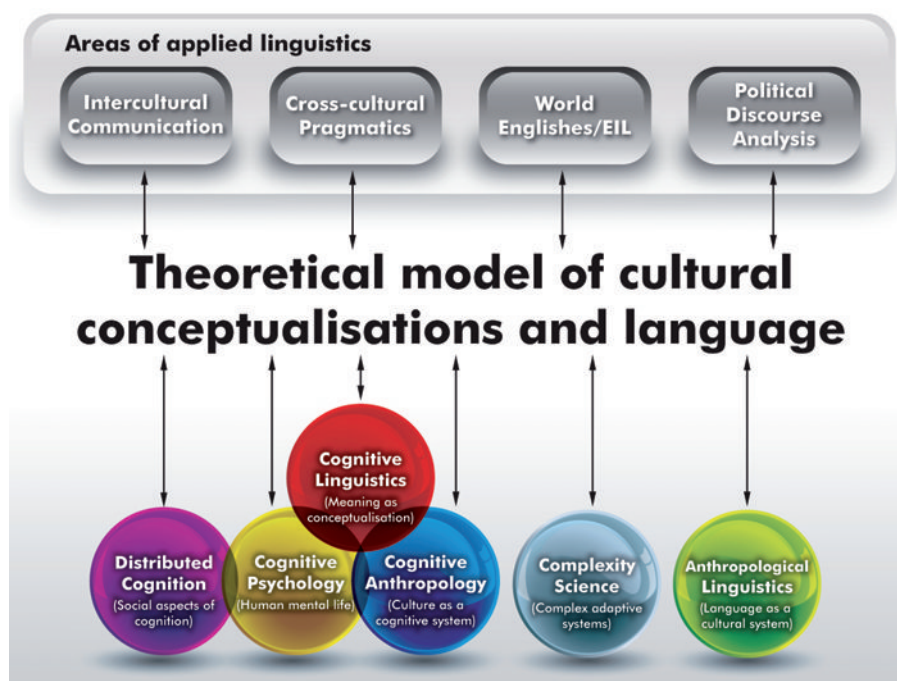


Figure 1. Multidisciplinary nature of the model cultural conceptualisations and language

PART I

Theoretical framework

CHAPTER 1

On cultural conceptualisations

Human conceptualisation is as much a cultural as it is an individual phenomenon. Members of a cultural group constantly negotiate ‘templates’ for their thought and behaviour in exchanging their conceptual experiences. Often, complex cognitive systems emerge out of somehow concerted conceptualisations that develop among the members of a cultural group over time. Such conceptualisations give rise to the notion of cultural cognition.

This chapter explores conceptualisations at the cultural level of cognition. In terms of representation, these conceptualisations may best be described as being ‘distributed’ across the minds constituting a cultural group. I develop a model of cultural conceptualisations and provide several examples, mainly from Aboriginal Australians. It is maintained that these conceptualisations may be instantiated in various cultural artefacts such as paintings, rituals and narratives. This chapter also presents a general approach to identifying such conceptualisations in discourse. The final part of the chapter provides further examples from recent research on Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations.

1.1 Conceptualisation

‘Conceptualisation’ is a cover term that refers to fundamental cognitive processes such as *schematisation* and *categorisation*. Schematisation refers to “a process that involves the systematic selection of certain aspects of a referent scene to present the whole, disregarding the remaining aspects” (Talmy, 1983: 225) and categorisation is a process by which distinct entities are treated as somehow equivalent (Rosch, 1978). These cognitive processes naturally lead to the development of *schemas* (e.g. Bartlett, 1932; Bobrow & Norman, 1975; Rumelhart, 1980) and *categories* (e.g. Rosch, 1978). I refer to such products of human cognition collectively as *conceptualisations*. There are also other kinds of conceptualisations such as *metaphors* (e.g. Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and *conceptual blends* (e.g. Fauconnier, 1997). My major concern in this chapter, however, is with categories and schemas. Other aspects of conceptualisations are explored in later chapters.

Recent accounts of human cognition, referred to as connectionism, view an individual's knowledge and conceptualisation as being represented over a network consisting of large numbers of units joined together in patterns of connection (e.g. McClelland, Rumelhart, & the PDP Research Group, 1986; Rumelhart, McClelland, & the PDP Research Group, 1986). Representation simply refers to the way information is laid out in certain spaces, such as a computer memory or a neural net. These models use the human brain as their basis for modelling. For example, the units in such models are analogues to neurons in the human brain. Individual concepts, according to these models, are represented in a distributed fashion across a network of units, or 'neurons', rather than in single units (Churchland & Sejnowski, 1992). The key notion in these models is 'distributed representation', as opposed to 'local' or 'localised representation' (Thorpe, 1995). Local representations allow for the representation of single concepts in single units but distributed representations are 'spread out' over large networks of units. Eliasmith (2001: 1) maintains that "a distributed representation is one in which meaning is not captured by a single symbolic unit, but rather arises from the interaction of a set of units, normally in a network of some sort". The concept of 'day', for instance, does not appear to be represented by a single 'day cell', but is rather distributed across a network of 'neurons' (Churchland & Sejnowski, 1992).

Schemas and categories, in connectionist models, are viewed as configurations of strongly interconnected units in the network (Rumelhart, Smolensky, McClelland, & Hinton, 1986). Connectionism considers schemas and categories as emergent properties of the networks. Emergent phenomena occur due to patterns of interactions between the elements of the system over time. In connectionist models, schemas and categories are not 'things' in the mind but patterns which emerge from knowledge which is represented in a distributed fashion across the network (Rumelhart, et al., 1986).

Connectionists view schemas and categories as properties of an individual's cognition. This book, however, establishes that these conceptualisations operate at a cultural level. It also presents a model of how cultural conceptualisations are distributed across a cultural group.

1.2 Cultural conceptualisations: A distributed model

Cultural groups are formed not just by the physical proximity of individuals but also by relative participation of individuals in each other's conceptual world. The degree to which individuals can participate in a group's conceptualised sphere determines their membership of the group. This participation, or non-participation, is often mirrored in interactions between the members of a cultural group as well as those between the members of different cultural groups.

Although it is admitted that the locus of conceptualisation may be the individual, a large proportion of conceptualisations are ultimately 'spread' across a cultural group. In other words, although conceptualisations can be initiated in individuals' cognition, they may well emerge as cultural cognitions. Using the notion of 'distributed representation' discussed above, cultural cognitions may be best described as networks of distributed representations across the minds in cultural groups. Cognitive networks do not necessarily end with the individual. Rather, they often enter into larger networks of cognitive interconnection with those of others in a group. The units in a cultural cognition would be roughly analogous to the minds that participate in the network, that is, the minds of the members of a cultural group.

Distributed accounts of human cognition view meanings as arising from the interaction of a set of units. I maintain that at the cultural level of cognition, meanings and conceptualisations appear to arise from the interaction between the members of a cultural group. The basic principle of distributed representations is that the representational interactions among the units can produce emergent group properties that cannot be reduced to the properties of the individual units. Again, similarly, interactions between the members of a cultural group can produce emergent conceptualisations that may not be reduced to conceptualisations of the individual minds. Cultural cognition is composed of *cultural schemas* (e.g. D'Andrade, 1995; Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002; Rice, 1980; Shore, 1996; Strauss & Quinn, 1997) and *cultural categories* (Lakoff, 1987; Rosch, 1978) that can be described as patterns of distributed knowledge across the cultural group. Cultural schemas and cultural categories, which I will refer to from now on collectively as *cultural conceptualisations*, embody group-level cognitive systems such as worldviews. The choice of 'conceptualisation' over 'concept' is meant to reflect and highlight the dynamic nature of such cognitive phenomena. Cultural conceptualisations are developed through interactions between the members of a cultural group and enable them to think as if in one mind, somehow more or less in a similar fashion. These conceptualisations are negotiated and renegotiated through time and across generations. Both inter-generational discourse and intra-generational discourse often reflect such negotiative processes. Discourse may be used as a tool for maintaining cultural conceptualisations through time. Aboriginal Australians, for instance, heavily rely on oral narrative for the maintenance of their cultural conceptualisations. They also often associate these conceptualisations with certain aspects of the environment to keep them 'alive'.

Cultural conceptualisations appear to be more cohesive in some cultural groups than others. Cultural conceptualisations may develop at various levels of a cultural group, such as family and clan. There is no direct relationship between the size of a cultural group and the coherence of their cultural conceptualisations. The

cohesiveness depends, to a large extent, on the integrity, uniformity and solidarity of cognitive systems and subsystems across the target cultural group. This is parallel to the view of schemas held by connectionists, discussed earlier. Rumelhart, Smolensky, McClelland and Hinton (1986: 53) maintain that “[t]he rigidity of the schema is determined by the tightness of bonding among the units that constitute the schema” (p. 37). They also maintain that “units may cohere more or less strongly to their mates and in this sense be more or less a part of the schema” (p. 37). Cultural conceptualisations can even emerge in very small cultural groups, where people have rather uniform lifestyles and cognitive systems of beliefs and values.

Distributed, Emergent Cultural Cognition

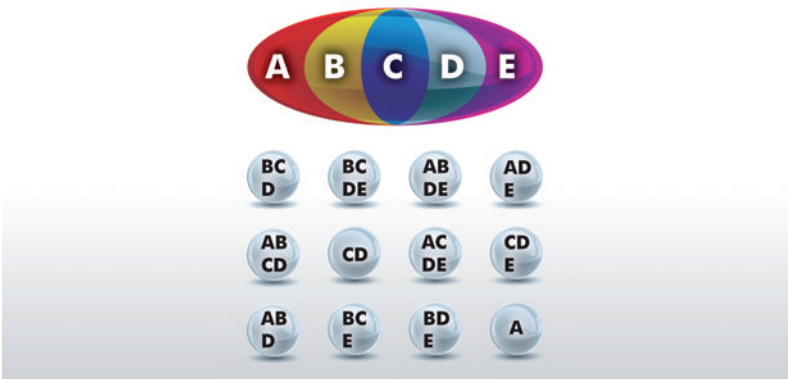


Figure 2. A distributed model of a cultural schema

The diagram in Figure 2 shows how cultural conceptualisation may be represented in a distributed fashion across the minds in a cultural group. In this diagram, the units that constitute the network symbolise the minds of the members of a cultural group. Letters A, B, C, D and E are used here to signify the elements of a cultural schema. It is clearly shown that the minds that constitute the cultural network do not equally share all the elements of the schema, nor does each mind contain all the elements of the schema. Cultural schemas are depicted here as an emergent property of cognition at the level of cultural group rather than the individual. That is, in this model, a cultural schema is viewed as emerging from the interactions between the minds that constitute the cultural group. It shows that the knowledge embodied in these schemas is distributed across the network of the minds in the group.

The model in Figure 2 also represents variations in the knowledge of cultural conceptualisations among the individual members of a cultural group. Note, for example, that one unit is marked by ADE, another by CD, and another only by A. This individual variation in the knowledge of cultural conceptualisations may be

accounted for in terms of differences in age, gender, etc. and also the degree of interaction between each member and the rest of the network.

This pattern of knowledge representation clearly accounts for ‘fuzzy’ understandings that characterise the reality of our communications. In reality, people draw *more or less* on a schema; they do not necessarily share all the components associated with a given schema. Consider a situation where the person that knows ABC communicates with an individual who is aware of only BCD. Although there is a certain amount of knowledge overlap and elements shared between the two of them (i.e. BC) there is still a certain number of component parts that are not (i.e. A & D) and this may result in the partial understanding of a message in communication. It should be noted that in many instances the individuals are not consciously aware of the role played by these cultural schemas in communication, nor can they always express the complexity of their meanings and/or identify the component elements of a given schema in a fully articulate manner.

Two Distributed Cultural Models

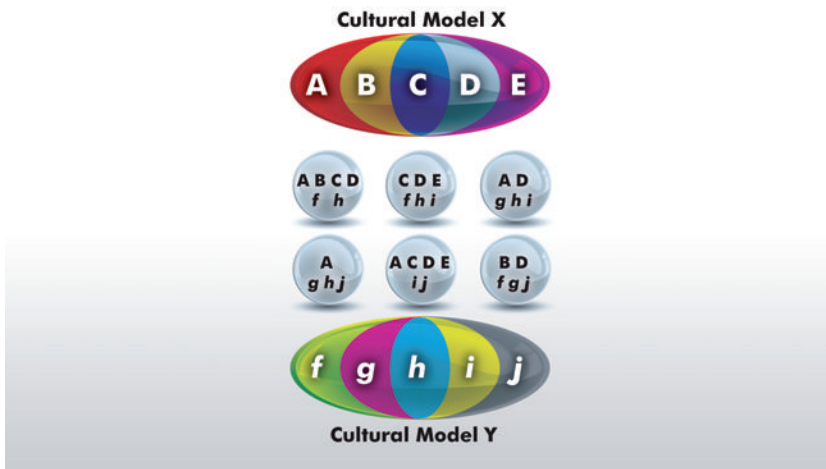


Figure 3. A distributed model of cultural schemas

A question that may arise with regard to the way a cultural schema is modelled here is ‘So how come we can call the one with A and the one with BC members of the same cultural group?’ The answer is that although they do not share any elements from this cultural schema, they may share many elements from other cultural schemas (see Figure 3). It can be seen that two people can share more elements from the cultural schema X and less elements from the cultural schema of Y or vice versa. Thus, it is not by virtue of the knowledge of only one schema that one becomes a member of a cultural group. It is the overall degree of how much a

person draws on various cultural schemas that makes an individual more or less representative of their cultural group.

Finally, it should be noted that the network and the emerging conceptualisations modelled in Figure 2 and Figure 3 are not static entities. As mentioned earlier, cultural conceptualisations are constantly negotiated and renegotiated across time and space. It often happens that when a member of a cultural group leaves the cultural group for a while, an element in their cognition may remain constant when it has changed in the original cultural group.

1.3 Examples of cultural conceptualisations

The following section gives an account of various types of schemas that are often discussed in the literature. In presenting these accounts I argue that all these conceptualisations often emerge at the cultural level of cognition. I also maintain that cultural conceptualisations discussed below are not equally imprinted in the minds of all the members of a cultural group. As mentioned above, these members may in fact *more or less* share these conceptualisations, which is illustrated by the model of 'distributed representations' discussed above.

1.3.1 Event schemas

Event schemas are abstracted from our experience of certain events (Mandler, 1984; Schank & Abelson, 1977). People usually have schemas for events such as 'funerals' and 'weddings.' There are also categories associated with these schemas. For example, the categories that are associated with a wedding schema may include 'wedding gift' and 'wedding banquet.' Event schemas usually encompass subschemas of events within events. The Western-Christian schema of Wedding, for example, usually includes subschemas of church ceremony, reception, etc.

Certain events are experienced more or less similarly by people from the same cultural background. These similar experiences often act as a locus for the emergence of cultural event schemas across the group. There are also cultural differences in schemas and categories that are associated with every event. For instance, the items that might be considered as appropriate gifts for a wedding might differ across cultures. Also, what is considered to be the appropriate food for the wedding ceremony often varies across different cultures. Certain cultures may not give gifts or even have wedding ceremonies.

An example of Aboriginal event schemas would be the Aboriginal schema of Funeral. The word for 'funeral' evokes a schema in many Aboriginal Australians

that is different from funeral schemas of people from many other cultures. Aboriginal people may travel long distances to attend the funerals of what might be considered by Anglo Australians as their 'distant relatives.' These funerals are characterised by distinctive ceremonies and an extended period of mourning, often up to months. Funerals are considered a significant obligation for Aboriginal people and also necessitate a relatively high degree of mobility on their part.

1.3.2 Role schemas

Augoustinos and Walker (1995:39) define *role schemas* as "knowledge structure that people have of specific role positions in cultural group". Nishida (1999) maintains that these schemas include "knowledge about social roles which denote sets of behaviours that are expected of people in particular social positions" (p. 758). These schemas appear to be associated with category instances such as 'secretary', 'teacher', 'bus driver', etc. Such schemas include knowledge about different characteristics associated with each role, such as clothing, age, way of speaking and the level of income.

It is obvious that people across different cultural groups construct different categories and schemas about the same role. Among many Aboriginal Australians the word for 'mother' evokes a role category, which would extend well beyond the biological mother and among certain Aboriginal people it may even include some male members of the extended family, such as an uncle (this will be adequately discussed later in this book). The associated role schemas often involve knowledge about obligations and responsibilities between children and the person referred to as 'mother' (see *Family* below for more details).

1.3.3 Image schemas

Image schemas are those which provide structures for certain conceptualisations (Johnson, 1987). Palmer (1996:66) regards them as "schemas of intermediate abstractions [between mental images and abstract propositions] that are readily imagined, perhaps as iconic images, and clearly related to physical (embodied) or social experiences". For example, in talking about "the foundation of our nation" we are drawing on the image schema of 'building' to capture our conceptualisation of 'nation'. The sentence *Tom has gone a long way toward changing his personality* implies the mapping of the image schema of 'path' onto the domain of 'personality change' (Johnson, 1987).

The 'path' image schema is often used, especially in Western patterns of thought, to frame various conceptualisations. Sentences such as *He's off the track*

clearly show the application of this image schema to the domains of ‘thinking’ and ‘discourse construction’. However, Aboriginal people of Australia do not often view thinking and construction of discourse as ‘moving along the road’ but rather view it as a circular or spiral pattern of interconnections of ideas, events, places, people, etc. In Western thought the image schema of ‘path’, and of course a straight path, has often been mapped onto ideologies, where, for instance, people talk about ‘the way to God’, ‘the path to God’, ‘the right path’, etc. Aboriginal ideology does not, however, appear to rely so much on this image schema as it does on circular images. Aboriginal worldview of the Dreamtime is characterised by circular patterns, which are associated with the journeys of the Ancestor Spirits. This is clearly reflected in much of Aboriginal art, which embodies Aboriginal worldview.

1.3.4 Proposition-schemas

Proposition-schemas may be defined as abstractions which act as models of thought and behaviour (Quinn, 1987). These schemas specify “concepts and the relations which hold among them” (Quinn & Holland, 1987: 25). Quinn analysed interviews about marriage that she had collected and transcribed from 11 North American couples. She maintains that proposition-schemas such as MARRIAGE IS ENDURING underlie the use of certain metaphors by American spouses in talking about their marriage.

Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1999) identified the proposition-schemas FAMILIES SHARE FOOD WITHOUT EXPECTATION OF RETURN, WORDS CAN KILL and WORDS ARE POWERFUL from the interactional events that they recorded in Kwara’ae (Solomon Islands). These proposition-schemas may in fact provide a basis for different patterns of reasoning across cultural groups. Stories by Aboriginal people often embody proposition-schemas that reflect Aboriginal cultures and worldview. The following two examples are found among the proposition-schemas identified in a series of Aboriginal storybooks, and will be analysed in more detail later in this chapter.

- ANCESTOR SPIRITS MADE THE LAW FOR US AND TOLD US HOW TO LIVE.
- BREAKING ABORIGINAL LAW CAN BRING HARM TO EVERYONE.

It should be noted that single sentences like the ones formulated above are merely partial, linguistic representations of proposition-schemas. Attempts made to linguistically explicate conceptualisations may at best *approximate* our conceptual experiences but may never capture them in totality.

1.3.5 Emotion schemas

Lutz (1987) observes that emotion concepts may be instantiations of certain schemas. Palmer (1996: 109) maintains that “emotions are complex configurations of goal-driven imagery that govern feeling states and scenarios, including discourse scenarios”. Lutz views emotions as social and cognitive in nature and observes that the Ifaulk “define, explain and understand emotions primarily by reference to the events or situations in which they occur” (1987: 292).

Aboriginal people also associate the feeling of ‘shame’ with certain situations. ‘Shame’ here of course does not necessarily involve guilt but some form of discomfort. One may experience ‘shame’ when meeting others for the first time or after an extended period of separation. One may also feel ‘shame’ for having done something good or bad or simply for being watched by others. This feeling can also be associated with activities which involve a degree of spotlighting such as dancing and singing. It can even arise from the respect that one has for even close people such as mother and father. The Aboriginal schema of Shame is a very complex one that runs through many aspects of Aboriginal life. Harkins (1990: 302) explicates the Aboriginal concept of ‘shame’ as follows:

X (is) SHAME

X feels like someone who thinks:

I am here: this is bad

I don’t know what things are good to do here

Something bad could happen because of this

People can think (and say?) something bad about me because of this

I want not to be here because of this

I want not to say anything because of this

X feels something bad because of this

The very statement “X feels like someone who thinks” and also the propositions that describe this thinking reflect the fact that this emotion is rooted or associated with certain conceptualisations, which may prove to be culturally specific.

In summary, I argue that the cultural conceptualisations discussed in the above section/sections may best be described in terms of ‘distributed representations’ across a cultural group. Many accounts of cultural schemas in the literature have treated these conceptualisations as static knowledge that is equally shared by the members of a cultural group. The reality of cultural conceptualisations, however, does not lend itself to such reductionist accounts. Members of a cultural group usually possess various degrees of knowledge/awareness of their cultural conceptualisations and this is what the model discussed here attempts to highlight.

1.4 Instantiation of cultural conceptualisations

Cultural conceptualisations may be instantiated and reflected in cultural artefacts such as painting, rituals, language, and even in silence. Aspects of these conceptualisations may also be instantiated through the use of paralinguistic devices such as gesture. In fact different cultural groups may produce certain unique 'devices' for instantiating their own cultural conceptualisations.

Aboriginal dot painting, for example, is one medium through which Aboriginal Australians have long instantiated, maintained, reinforced and refreshed their cultural conceptualisations in the light of their cultural experiences. One often hears several stories associated with a single/the same dot painting. One story, for instance, can be owned by a particular group and another one shared by several groups. There could be a sacred–secret story and a public one, all associated with one painting. These stories usually convey Aboriginal conceptualisations that embody an Aboriginal worldview with its distinctive account of land, animals and people, as well as Aboriginal morals, law and cultural values. The paintings and the stories are passed on to later generations to maintain Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations. It is often observed that, for example, the same schema is instantiated through different stories among different Aboriginal cultural groups.

Different levels and units of language such as speech acts, idioms, metaphors, discourse markers, etc. may somehow instantiate aspects of such cultural conceptualisations (e.g. Palmer, 1996). For example, the use of the phrase *sharmandeam* ('I'm ashamed') in Persian instantiates a cultural schema that is associated with several speech acts such as Expressing Gratitude, Requesting Goods and Services, Offering Goods and Services, and Apologising (the use of cultural schemas in Persian is discussed in later sections of this book). As mentioned earlier, discourse is a vehicle for the representation of cultural conceptualisations. In fact, aspects of discourse that heavily draw on cultural conceptualisations can facilitate intra-cultural communication, while they can complicate and even impede fluid inter-cultural communication, an issue explored in later chapters. Within a cultural group, communication based on cultural conceptualisations involves much more fluid transfer of messages and also yields more homogeneous interpretations than communication based on 'idiosyncratic' conceptualisations, which are formed out of intra-personal life experiences of individuals.

1.5 Identifying cultural conceptualisations

Generally speaking, identifying cultural conceptualisations requires an ethnographic approach to the analysis of cultural artefacts, such as discourse. In this approach,

the analysis focuses closely on the identification of conceptualisations that might be specific to the culture of the speakers. The ethnographic approach adopted towards this end needs to be informed by both an emic and an etic perspective.

The etic perspective would be required for the identification of conceptualisations that appear to be 'marked' for people outside the culture of the speakers. In discourse, a marked conceptualisation may surface as an unfamiliar vocabulary item, a distinctive pattern of use, a distinctive pattern of association, a distinctive frequency of usage, etc. It should, however, be noted that cultural conceptualisations are not always distinctively marked by surface features of discourse. In fact, the analyst may need to seek emic explanations to identify conceptualisations that are culture-specific. The emic perspective is required in this approach to provide 'insider' interpretations of discourse.

It is clear that identifying conceptualisations operating at the cultural level hinges upon extending the unit of analysis to more than one individual and more than one instance of discourse. The highly complex nature of specific cultural conceptualisations starts to surface when discourse is examined in light of the intuitions of *several* insiders, each of whom might show varying degrees of knowledge about their cultural conceptualisations. This variation in the knowledge of cultural conceptualisations is what the notion of 'distributed representation' is meant to depict in the model being discussed in this work.

In this approach the analyst is bound, by the aim of the analysis, to focus on the task of identification of conceptualisations that exist at the group level. The explication of cultural conceptualisations naturally involves a certain degree of idealisation, a process which characterises almost all sciences. However, care should be taken not to idealise conceptualisations to the point of coming up with formalisations that may not make sense in relation to individuals' reality. Examples of the latter are IF/THEN formulas that have sometimes been proposed for the explication of schemas.

An example of identification of cultural conceptualisations comes from the author's recent research where the literacy materials used for teaching Aboriginal students were analysed in terms of the extent to which they reflected Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations. The analysis was part of a series of investigations carried out to explore the degree to which these materials were inclusive of Aboriginal experience.

During the analysis, a number of Aboriginal people provided the emic perspective in explicating the cultural conceptualisations that were instantiated in the stories. The explications clearly reflect the fact that the Aboriginal speakers were drawing on conceptualisations that could not be described as being shared equally. In other words, the emic explanations reflected what I have called 'distributed' knowledge of Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations. The explications were also

found to be in consonance with anthropological research on Aboriginal cultures. The following sections provide a partial explication of the Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations of the Dreamtime and Family, as they emerged from the analysis. These examples provide a short introduction to the way the model of cultural conceptualisations can be applied to the analysis of language produced as the realisation of culture. Later chapters will provide more detailed analyses drawn from cultural groups such as Persian speakers and Aboriginal English speakers, as well as from domains such as English as an International Language (EIL).

1.5.1 Example: The Dreamtime

A good number of the texts analysed include stories that derived from the Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations of *The Dreamtime*. These Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations, which embody the Aboriginal worldview, reveal knowledge about how the land came to be shaped and inhabited. During a process referred to as 'the Dreamtime', the Spirit Ancestors moved across a barren land, hunting, camping, fighting and loving, and in doing so shaped what had been a featureless landscape. These Ancestors made the plants, animals and human beings, which, in turn, were capable of shape-shifting, taking on the shape of the other. The Ancestors are still present and always will be. Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations of the Dreamtime are very complex and, as such, go far beyond what can be summarised in the brief description given here (e.g. Stanner, 1979).

The categories that extend from the Dreamtime do not easily match the categories that many non-Aboriginal cultural groups have developed. There are no such categories as animals, human beings and plants in the Dreamtime. The partitioning which marks many non-Aboriginal ideologies does not operate as such in the Aboriginal worldview. The animals, human beings and plants are one single entity and they all belong to Mother Earth.

The Ancestors in the Dreamtime created the features of the environment when travelling across the land and then ultimately themselves turned into the features of the land. This is clearly reflected in sentences such as *Those two big rocks are the bodies of two of our ancestors* (Kidd, 1992). Such sentences refer to a pattern of conceptualisation where a feature of the environment, such as a stone, can evoke an image in the mind of an Aboriginal person and the image in turn evokes the Dreamtime Story schema and in particular a specific story associated with that feature of the land. I call such images *schema-based images*. The texts that were analysed revealed several instances of such images.

Some of the stories analysed appear to instantiate subschemas of the Dreamtime schema that may be partially explicated in the form of the following 'proposition-schemas':

- WE MUST OBSERVE THE ENVIRONMENT CLOSELY TO PERCEIVE SIGNS AND MESSAGES.
- VISITING CERTAIN PLACES HAS FATAL CONSEQUENCES BECAUSE THEY ARE ASSOCIATED WITH THE DREAMTIME SPIRITS.
- ANCESTOR SPIRITS MADE THE LAW FOR US AND TOLD US HOW TO LIVE.
- PEOPLE SHOULD SHARE WHAT THEY HAVE WITH OTHERS WHO NEED IT.
- BREAKING ABORIGINAL LAW CAN BRING HARM TO EVERYONE.
- THE THINGS LIKE DAY AND NIGHT WERE NOT ALWAYS THERE.
- SOME THINGS WERE CREATED OUT OF CONFLICTS.
- YOU MUST NEVER BE GREEDY AND DISHONEST.
- SOME PLACES ARE SACRED AND SECRET.

It should be emphasised here again that the above sentences are just partial, linguistic representations of schemas. Clearly, conceptualisations that encompass worldviews and ideologies that have been constructed and developed over centuries may not be faithfully captured in single sentences.

Family

The majority of the texts that were analysed appear to instantiate the Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations of Family. Consider the following text:

When I played on the raft in the river, it floated. Nan watched.
 When Little Brother and I played on the raft in the river, it floated. Nan watched.
 When Cousin, Little Brother and I played on the raft in the river, it floated. Nan watched.
 When Sister, Cousin, Little Brother and I played on the raft in the river, it floated. Nan watched.
 When Aunt, Sister, Cousin, Little Brother and I played on the raft in the river, it floated. Nan watched.
 When Big Brother, Aunt, Sister, Cousin, Little Brother and I played on the raft in the river, it floated. Nan watched.
 When the dog, Big Brother, Aunt, Sister, Cousin, Little Brother and I played on the raft in the river, it sank. Nan laughed. (Briggs-Pattison & Harvey, 1998)

This text, among many others, depends on the fact that family is the essence of Aboriginal existence. It is almost impossible to study an Aboriginal cultural group without understanding the structure and function of the Aboriginal family since it is the main pillar of the Aboriginal psyche and cultural group. As Eades (1988:98) puts it “[w]hen people talk about being Aboriginal, they invariably talk about Aboriginal family relationships”. Tonkinson (1998:150) observes that, “[i]n Aboriginal cultural group everybody with whom a person comes into contact is

called by a kinship term, and social interaction is guided by patterns of behaviour considered appropriate to particular kin relationships.”

‘Family’ for Aboriginal peoples lends itself to complex systems of categories and schemas which run through various aspects of Aboriginal life. To start with, the general cultural category of Family usually moves beyond that of nuclear family and captures one’s extended family including cousins, and cousins of cousins, etc. Subcategories such as ‘father’, ‘mother’, ‘aunt’ and ‘uncle’ may even include people whom an Anglo Australian might categorise as ‘second cousins’. Aboriginal kinship systems are ‘classificatory’ systems (Tonkinson, 1998), where, for example, the term for ‘father’ might refer to one’s father as well as father’s brothers and the term for ‘mother’ may refer to one’s mother as well as mother’s sisters and even mother’s cousins. The corollary to this system is that one’s cousins are thus considered and called ‘brother’ and ‘sister,’ or ‘cousin brother’ and ‘cousin sister’.

At the schema level, each of these categories is associated with complex schemas that embody knowledge about behaviour and obligation. Each kin term “carries with it the obligation to observe certain behavioural rules known to all, and this makes it easy for the interaction to proceed along well-defined lines, regardless of whether the person encountered is loved or hated, admired or feared” (Tonkinson, 1998: 151).

The Aboriginal cultural schemas of Family embody behavioural rules that should be observed in relationships and may involve some kind of restraint. This restraint may relate to “touching, joking, calling by name, direct eye contact, the passing of objects from hand to hand, visiting other person’s camp, argument, sexual innuendo and physical assault” (Tonkinson, 1998: 153). Obligations may relate to matters such as:

- Marriage and betrothal arrangements;
- Food gathering, distribution and sharing;
- Sharing of other goods;
- Certain trading relationships with people in other communities; and
- Educational roles, involving not only parents but other kin as well.

(Edwards, 1998)

Many Aboriginal groups have a special ‘avoidance’ style of speaking. This avoidance may be associated with the presence of a relative with whom one can only use the formal style of speech, with no joking, according to the laws of the kinship system. A man and his mother-in-law, or a woman and her son-in-law may not be allowed to look directly at one another, and have to use an avoidance speech style when in the other’s presence. Avoidance styles have the same grammar as the normal, everyday language style, but make use of a number of different words. This avoidance is of course not an expression of enmity but a sign of respect and

an indication of mutual duties and gifts (Edwards, 1998). For some Aboriginal groups, avoidance is basically a total ban on speech with certain people, and in some cases it forbids certain people to utter each other's name.

Knowledge about this complex system of kinship and its associated concepts is captured in the Aboriginal cultural schema of Family. The Aboriginal cultural schema of Family includes knowledge about the structure as well as the function of family relationships. It provides a guide and a yardstick for one's behaviour towards other kin and also for predicting the likely behaviour of others.

It should finally be noted that different Aboriginal sub-cultures and even different Aboriginal people show variations in the knowledge of cultural conceptualisations explicated above. That is, the above explications should not be taken to represent a fixed, uniform pattern of knowledge in every Aboriginal person. As noted above, the reality of cultural conceptualisations may best be described as those that are 'distributed' across the minds in a cultural group.

1.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter began by discussing 'conceptualisation' and 'cultural conceptualisations'. The notion of 'distributed representation' was then employed to account for and develop a model of cultural conceptualisations. In this model, cultural conceptualisations are viewed to be representations that are distributed across the minds of members of a cultural group. These conceptualisations largely emerge from the interactions between the members of the cultural group and are constantly negotiated and renegotiated across generations. In addition, it is argued that various cultural artefacts such as paintings and narratives may instantiate cultural conceptualisations. Examples of cultural conceptualisations from Aboriginal Australians were presented throughout the chapter. A general approach, based on the ethnographic notions of 'emic' and 'etic', was also proposed for the identification of cultural conceptualisations.

In summary, the model and approach presented in this chapter emphasise the importance of viewing cognition as a property of cultural groups and not just individuals. In particular, this line of enquiry could prove to be especially fruitful in domains where understanding discourse closely hinges on understanding its underlying cultural conceptualisations. These would include the analysis of discourse produced by L2 learners as well as the analysis of intercultural discourse. The next chapter will explore this model further by placing cultural conceptualisations within the broader context of cultural cognition.

Distributed, emergent cultural cognition, conceptualisation and language

2.1 The locus of cultural cognition

In classical circles of cognitive psychology the word ‘cognition’ has largely been associated with mind and mental activity. Different paradigms within cognitive psychology have, however, not agreed upon the nature of the human cognitive system. Proponents of what came to be known as *classicism* (Newell, 1980) viewed cognition as a symbolic system whereas advocates of connectionism (Davis, 1992) viewed cognition as emerging from interactions among networks of interconnected processing units called *neurons*.

Moreover, the research focus on the notion of cognition was not limited exclusively to the field of cognitive psychology. Instead it began to attract the interest of scholars from other disciplines such as biology, linguistics and anthropology. This led to the development of the mega-discipline called ‘cognitive science’ and also to the emergence of sub-fields such as cognitive anthropology and cognitive linguistics.

One of the natural consequences of the development of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of cognition was a revisiting and, in fact, expansion of the notion of cognition. Yet not all scholars within the areas of cognitive science have concentrated their attention on finding out what goes on inside the mind of isolated individuals. Some have been more inquisitive about population-level and group-level correlates or consequences of cognitive processes. The expansion of the notion of cognition took place along several lines. One group of scholars took interest in the interaction between the human mind and the environment. Hutchins, an anthropologist and a cognitive psychologist, and his colleagues, for example, observed that human cognition constantly interacts with an environment that is rich in organisational resources (Hutchins, 1994). For Hutchins, cognition is distributed across individuals, tools and artefacts.

Another departure from the limited scope of cognition in traditional cognitive psychology has been the equation of cognition with action as well as activity that is socially situated. In an introduction to a field guide, Anderson (2003: 91) states that:

For over fifty years in philosophy, and for perhaps fifteen in Artificial Intelligence and related disciplines, there has been a re-thinking of the nature of cognition. Instead of emphasizing formal operations on abstract symbols, this new approach focuses attention on the fact that most real-world thinking occurs in very particular (and often very complex) environments, is employed for very practical ends, and exploits the possibility of interaction with and manipulation of external props. It thereby foregrounds the fact that cognition is a highly embodied or situated activity – emphasis intentionally on all three – and suggests that thinking beings ought therefore be considered first and foremost as acting beings.

The above quote clearly highlights two directions in which the notion of cognition has been expanded, that is, ‘situated’ activity and ‘embodiment’. The embodiment thesis, in general terms, views cognition to be mediated by our bodily experience. The exact relation between the body and human cognition and the interpretations given to the word ‘body’, however, have varied from overlapping views to conflicting and contrasting ones (e.g. Violi, 2003; Wilson, 2002). In this context, again, different interpretations of the notion of ‘cognition’ have had epistemological consequences for how the notion of ‘body’ has been viewed and for the role that has been attributed to it in relation to cognitive activities (see more in Violi, 2003).

Another dimension along which the notion of cognition has been expanded is the dimension of culture. Scholars with interest in both cognition and culture have been exploring how culture and cognition interact with each other and with other systems such as language (e.g. Cole, 1996; D’Andrade, 1995; Hutchins, 1994; Shore, 1996; Strauss & Quinn, 1997; Tomasello, 1999). As in other approaches to the study of cognition, various scholars in this area have not totally agreed on the nature of the relationship between culture and cognition or even on what constitutes culture and/or cognition. For some, cognition is an aspect of culture in that culture influences various cognitive processes (e.g. Altarriba, 1993; Redding, 1980). Sperber and Hirschfeld (1999: cxv) view the relationship between culture and cognition along two dimensions, reflected in the following statement:

The study of culture is of relevance to cognitive sciences for two major reasons. The first is that the very existence of culture, for an essential part, is both an effect and a manifestation of human cognitive abilities. The second reason is that the human societies of today culturally frame every aspect of human life, and, in particular, of cognitive activity.

Within the paradigm of cognitive linguistics many subscribe to the view of Langacker (1994), namely, that culture is primarily a cognitive phenomenon, with individual minds as its locus. Langacker, however, acknowledges that not all aspects of culture are represented in the human mind.

2.2 Emergent cultural cognition

I maintain that ‘cognition’ may also be viewed as a property of cultural groups, and not just individuals. I refer to this level of cognition as *emergent cultural cognition* in the sense that what is being described as cognition here is an *emergent* system (e.g. Johnson, 2001) resulting from the interactions between the members of a cultural group across time and space. This of course does not confine the scope of culture to the cognitive domain. *Emergent cultural cognition* may be instantiated in various aspects of people’s lives including aspects of their physical environments, artefacts, tools, rituals, paintings, dance, etc.

Cultural cognition is heterogeneous in the sense that it is heterogeneously distributed across the minds in a cultural group. The distribution of cultural cognition extends across the dimensions of time and space. Members of a cultural group negotiate and renegotiate their cultural cognition across generations, vertically and horizontally, through a multitude of communicative events. The notion of cognition here encompasses complex systems that are dynamic and ever evolving, rather than a fixed set of representations that extend to a cultural group. Cross-sectionally, the notion of distributed, emergent cultural cognition may be diagrammed as in Figure 2 (see page 6). It is because cultural conceptualisations may be viewed as an integral aspect of cultural cognition and distributed in a similar manner across cultural groups.

Emergent properties of cognition at the group level supersede what is represented in the mind of each individual and arise from the interactions between the group members. Members of a cultural group may share some but not every aspect of their cultural cognition with other members, and the patterns are not exactly the same for all individuals across the cultural group. In other words, as mentioned earlier, cultural cognition is heterogeneously distributed across the members in a cultural group.

The abovementioned view of distributed cognition is an initial step in the direction of constructing the type of ideational account of culture that Keesing (1987:371) had in mind when he said: “An ideational theory of culture can look at cultural knowledge as distributed within a social system, can take into account the variation between individuals’ knowledge of and vantage points on the cultural heritage of their people”. It is this variation between individuals’ knowledge of cultural conceptualisations that my use of the term ‘heterogeneously distributed cultural cognition’ is intended to highlight. It should be stressed here that I do not view the ultimate level of cultural cognition in terms of fixed representations inside the mind of individuals, but as emergent properties resulting from the interactions between members of a cultural group. This conception of distributed cognition seems also to be implied in Kronenfeld’s (2002: 430) statement that

“culture has no existence outside of our individual representations of it, and since these representations are variable, there exist no single place where the whole of any culture is stored or represented. Thus, culture is necessarily and intrinsically a distributed system”. Kronenfeld also observes that culture is not merely fixed knowledge, but productive representations of a growing repertoire capable of generating new responses to novel situations that still make sense to cultural groups. Such a view of cultural cognition constitutes a challenge for ‘cultural determinism’ in that it allows for individual differences while acknowledging the existence of collective cognition. Cultural orientation, from this perspective, is seen as a continuum rather than either/or membership.

In terms of consciousness, members of a group may be conscious of the influence that a particular ‘collective’ cognition has on their thought patterns and behaviour and in fact may try to opt out of it, or some aspects of it. The issue here is that even in those cases, the individual is very likely to recognise certain knowledge or conceptualisation to be characteristic of the culture they belong(ed) to. Cultural cognition is usually the basis for many aspects of our actions and behaviour in two senses: one is that our behaviour, including our linguistic performance, largely derives from our cultural cognition, and second is that we largely operate on the basis of the assumption that other interactants’ behaviour draws on the same cultural cognition. In general we may say that cultural cognition serves as the basis for the ‘hypotheses’ that people make regarding what they encounter during their cultural experience.

The abovementioned view of cultural cognition is at least partly consistent with certain versions of other expansions of the notion of cognition. Hutchins (1994), for example, also views cognition as ‘distributed’, though in a slightly different sense. Hutchins (e.g. 1994) mainly emphasises the distribution of *cognitive processes* and includes the material environmental within the domain of cognitive processing. In contrast, I emphasise the emergent nature of cultural cognition, which is primarily cultural knowledge, and I use the term ‘distributed’ in conjunction with the term ‘heterogeneous’ to highlight the view that cultural cognition is not equally imprinted in the minds of the people in a cultural group. Despite these differences in the focus of research, the two strands should be viewed as complementary, particularly given the fact that Hutchins acknowledges that cognition is a cultural process.

The notion of cultural cognition presented here is also consistent with the version of embodied cognition which regards ‘body’ as a constructed notion. Whatever the role of body in our cognitive life, it should be kept in mind that conceptualisations of ‘body’ may be culture-specific and, in general, the body takes part and acts as a conceptual resource for our cultural experience. Even the number of

senses that we assign to our bodies may vary across different cultures. On the other hand, the situations and contexts implied by the notion of ‘situated cognition’ are in fact largely social and cultural. Anderson (2003: 126) also stresses the importance of the role of culture in situated and embodied cognition, maintaining that:

Along with research in situated cognition, EC [embodied cognition] further suggests that intelligence lies less in the individual brain, and more in the dynamic interaction of brains with the wider world – including especially the social and cultural worlds which are so central to human cognition – and therefore suggests that fields like sociology and cultural studies can themselves be important resources for (and in some guises are part of) the cognitive sciences.

2.3 Emergent cultural cognition as a complex adaptive system

It is to be noted at this point that emergent cultural cognition may be viewed as a *complex adaptive system* (Waldrop, 1992) in that it has the properties that are generally associated with complex systems. One of the main attributes of complex adaptive systems is that they reveal emergent properties. As mentioned earlier, cultural cognition is also an emergent system in that it results from the interactions between the members of a cultural group across time and space. The emergent properties of cultural cognition as a system at the global level are not mirror images of those that characterise the cognition of each individual or the sum of the individuals within the group.

A closely related property of complex systems is that the parts constituting the system cannot contain the whole. In this sense, also, cultural cognition is a complex system in that an individual’s cognition does not capture the totality of their cultural group’s cognition. Furthermore, when analysing the case of cultural cognition, we find that its control is distributed throughout the group, rather than it being subject to centralised mechanisms of control.

Another characteristic of complex systems is that they are nested. That is, the agents that are components of the system are themselves complex adaptive systems. Similarly, members of a cultural group, as agents of cultural cognition, are themselves complex systems, controlled by nervous systems, endocrine systems, etc. Like other complex systems, cultural cognitions have their own unique history of interactions that constantly construct and reconstruct the system. Often, small changes in the interactions of cultural groups have had a remarkable influence on the future direction of their cultural cognition. This view is largely reflected in the writings of Vygotsky (e.g. Vygotsky, 1978), who viewed cognitive phenomena as embodying the characteristics of historically bound sociocultural relations.

One of the characteristics of complex systems is the difficulty involved in determining their boundaries: they are 'open systems'. The decision is usually based on the observer's needs and prejudices rather than any intrinsic property of the system itself. This aspect of complex systems also extends to cultural cognition in that the boundaries as to where one cultural group ends or another begins are difficult, if not impossible, to determine.

In relation to cultural cognition, as is the case with other types of complex systems, the role of an individual agent can be viewed as two-fold. On the one hand, the individual is the locus of cultural cognition and can have an initial causal role in its development, dissemination and reinforcement. On the other hand, an individual's performance can be influenced or determined to a varying degree by the cultural cognition that characterises the cultural group. Thus, the role of individuals in a cultural group may be described in terms of a circular pattern of cause and effect.

At this point, I would like to focus on conceptualisation and language as two integral aspects of cultural cognition. The whole field of cognitive linguistics is based on the assumption that various aspects of language embody conceptualisation of experience. While it is acknowledged that the locus of language and conceptualisation is the individual, the two ultimately emerge at the cultural level of cognition. This thesis will be explored further in the following sections.

2.4 Cultural conceptualisations: Cultural models, categories and schemas

Human conceptual faculties, which might be largely universal and innate, derive from various sources of experience, including bodily and environmental, which enable new experiences to be made sense of and organised. Such experiences lead to the development of our conceptual knowledge, which is both complex and systematic. The units of organisation in our conceptual knowledge, such as *categories* (e.g. Rosch, 1978) and *schemas* (e.g. Arbib, 1992; Bartlett, 1932; Bobrow & Norman, 1975; Mandler, 1984; Rumelhart, 1980), appear to be based on certain associations that may help us tell them apart from each other. Robinson (1997: 263) maintains that such associations reflect "regularities in an organism's perception of and interaction with its environment". He considers schemas and categories to be higher-level representational networks that store conceptual relationships rather than simple stimulus-response patterns. He notes that "all of these schemata, categories and other conceptual relationships are probabilistic functions which are not specific to any instantiations of the group they summarise" (Robinson, 1997: 263).

Categories include concepts that enter into *x is a kind of y* association. In the case of schemas, the basis for association is rather experiential in the sense that elements of a schema may have co-occurred in the same context or an event. In general, the relationships that hold between the elements of a schema may be thematic, temporal and/or spatial. As an example, 'bill' and 'food' are related schematically, as 'food' may evoke the event schema of paying a bill in a restaurant (Schank & Abelson, 1977). Here the relationship is more spatial and obviously experiential. On the other hand, 'food' and 'pasta' are related to each other categorically, as 'pasta' is an 'instance' of the category of 'food'. Blewitt (1993: 104) makes a distinction between schematic representations and categorical representations, which she calls 'taxonomic', in the following way:

Schematically organised representations preserve the temporal sequences and the spatial and functional relations among units of experience. For example, "spaghetti" and "bib" may be related in lexical memory, because they label categories of objects that have been functionally connected and thus experienced together in the same event. [...] Taxonomically organised representations are based on similarities among the units being represented, that is, on shared meanings. For example, the nouns "apple" and "spaghetti" may be related in memory because they refer to categories of objects that are foods.

Conceptualisation of experience, of course, does not end in forming categories and schemas but also involves setting up mental models (Johnson-Laird, 1980) mapping across concepts, with the end result of *metaphors*, and also *perspectivising* what is being conceptualised (Verhagen, 2007). A major focus in cognitive linguistics is identifying such conceptualisations and recruiting them when delving into people's social experience (Dirven, Frank, & Pütz, 2003; Frank, 2003b). The following important point needs to be made regarding the nature of conceptualisations such as schemas and categories: they have been conceived differently by the various and sometimes competing paradigms in cognitive and social psychology, and naturally by scholars working in different (sub)disciplines. For example, generally speaking, earlier schools of psychology conceived of schemas as 'structures' in the mind, while connectionists view schemas as patterns of activated knowledge (Rumelhart, et al., 1986).

Regardless of what the status of conceptualisations, such as schemas and categories, is within the boundaries of an individual's cognition, I would like to argue that these conceptualisations also largely emerge at the cultural level of cognition discussed above. People partly partake in similar experience and, as such, constantly negotiate and conventionalise the way they conceptualise their experience. Although, in all probability, no two individuals conceptualise experience in exactly the same way, it is often possible to perceive a collective cognition emerging

from the interactions between the members of a cultural group. I refer to such conceptualisations as *cultural conceptualisations* (refer to Chapter 1). In summary, when considered as aspects of cultural cognition, cultural conceptualisations appear to be heterogeneously distributed across the minds of a cultural group. That is, these conceptualisations are not equally imprinted in the minds of the members in the cultural group at any given point in time. Thus, a cultural group is not a collection of a number of individuals who live in a certain area, but rather people who *more or less* conceptualise experience in a similar fashion. As such, the notion of a cultural group is not intended to convey rigid boundaries. Within the popular classifications of culture there are still those who conceptualise experience more narrowly and, as such, create a subculture within a culture. While one might object to the fuzziness or looseness of notions such as ‘cultural group’, our realities appear to be largely characterised by ‘looseness’ rather than by rigid boundaries and units.

Cultural conceptualisations usually develop into complex, dynamic systems of knowledge, which are not totally and equally shared by the members of the target cultural group. Over time, such dynamic systems may act as major anchor points for people’s thought and behaviour and may even constitute a worldview. In other words, cultural conceptualisations enable the individuals across a cultural group to think, so to speak, with one mind. Often, a simple clue or a gesture is enough to point to the cultural conceptualisations that are acting as the basis for a social interaction. The operation of such aspects of cultural cognition is often, but not necessarily always, salient to those who come from outside the cultural group. Stated differently, social interactions between the members of a cultural group may suggest the operation of some sort of a collective cognition to those who are not members of the cultural group, whereas the members of the in-group can be quite unaware that such cultural conceptualisation is being brought into play. It should be noted here that different cultural groups differ with regard to the coherence of their cultural conceptualisations. Some cultures, and some people within a given culture, develop more cohesive conceptualisations.

To make a distinction between different forms of cultural conceptualisation, imagine that in a given society people interact with each other in conceptualising and establishing systems of kinship. One aspect of kinship conceptualisation would be to use linguistic labels to *categorise* people into ‘mum’, ‘dad’, ‘aunt’, etc. Another would be to develop norms of conduct and responsibility towards each kin. These norms do not define the category. Rather, they are associated with the category thematically and, as such, would need to be considered as *schemas*. A related notion that has been used in cognitive anthropology and more increasingly in cognitive linguistics is *cultural model* (e.g. D’Andrade, 1995; D’Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Frank, 2003a; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Wolf & Simo Bobda, 2001).

The term, initially intended to be used instead of ‘folk models’ (Keesing, 1987), has also been employed in the sense of “a cognitive schema that is intersubjectively shared by a social group” (D’Andrade, 1987:112). D’Andrade constantly refers to the notion of ‘schema’ in his explication of the term ‘cultural model’ (D’Andrade, 1987:112) and he regards models as complex cognitive schemas. Strauss and Quinn (1997:49) also maintain that “another term for cultural schemas (especially of the more complex sort) is *cultural model*”. Polzenhagen and Wolf (2007) have used the notion of ‘cultural model’ as more general, overarching conceptualisations that would encompass metaphors and schemas that are minimally complex.

For the sake of this writing I view cultural models as conceptualisations that hierarchically characterise higher nodes of our conceptual knowledge and that encompass a network of schemas, categories and metaphors. An example of such a model would be the cultural model of American Marriage (Quinn, 1987). This cultural model includes conceptualisations such as GIVING AWAY schema, WEDDING GIFT category, and MARRIAGE AS JOURNEY metaphor. Returning to the hypothetical case of kinship mentioned above, then, we may refer to the ‘cultural model of Kinship’. The content and the relationship between these conceptualisations may be summarised as follows:

CULTURAL MODEL OF KINSHIP

Kinship categories: categories such as “mum”, “dad”, “aunty”, “close relative”, “in-laws” etc.

Kinship schemas: schemas that embody norms and values related to kinship, such as behaviour rules for every member of the family in view of their status, etc. An example of this would be RESPECT FOR PARENTS schema.

Kinship metaphors: Conceptual metaphors that are used in relation to kin, such as Kwara’ae’s kin metaphor EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS ARE ALL ONE HEARTH. (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1999:230)

I would now like to make the observation that, although the locus of such conceptualisations may be the individual, eventually they ‘spread’ among the group members and are then constantly negotiated and renegotiated. The dynamics of such group interactions eventually lead to emergent properties that may no longer be reduced to individual representations. What this means is that schemas and categories become the objects of interactions between the members of a given cultural group and, as such, emerge as aspects of distributed cultural cognition. It is at this level that I consider these conceptualisations to constitute *cultural models*, *cultural categories* and *cultural schemas*. Such conceptualisations become ‘cultural’ not only because they may differ across different cultures, but also because

they are the emergent properties of the interactions between the members of a cultural group. Schematically, conceptualisations such as cultural models may be visually represented using the same diagram in Figure 2 that was presented earlier in Chapter 1. This is due to the fact that these conceptualisations constitute an integral aspect of emergent, distributed cultural cognition.

Figure 2 is an attempt to visually render the locus of a cultural conceptualisation showing that such a cultural model has the two levels of abstraction. Again, the top part of the diagram represents the 'global' level of the model, which emerges from the interactions between the members of a cultural group, while the lower section depicts the way in which the 'local' level is instantiated in a distributed fashion across the individual minds composing the group. This explanation provides an account of the way in which some people know more than others about a given cultural model and also that two people might share more elements from a cultural model than some other members of the cultural group¹. Factors such as age and gender might contribute to what people have in common and share with each other. One aspect of cultural development and, hence, the increased stability of the model/overall system is movement from a state where someone knows A to where the same person knows ABCD for example, from a cultural model. But of course, issues such as the extent to which one enters into interactions with the members of their cultural group would also determine how much a person knows from/about their cultural conceptualisations.

Figure 3 (see page 7) depicts how two members may share more elements from one cultural model than from another. This pattern of distributed cultural cognition accounts for 'fuzzy' understandings that characterise our daily cultural interactions. As mentioned earlier, people coming from the same cultural background generally work on the basis of the assumption that they have shared cultural models, whereas in reality this might not be totally the case, as has been discussed here. This situation often leads to misunderstandings and can even create conflict.

Indeed, the situation can become much more complex in the case of intercultural communication contexts in which interlocutors may be drawing on different and even contrasting cultural models. In such situations, each interlocutor is likely to draw on the cultural models that characterise his/her 'native' culture. However, there is often the case where interlocutors may draw on the elements of two or more cultural models to which they have been exposed during their lifetimes (Frank, 2003b, 2005; Frank & Susperregi, 2001). Conflict and miscommunication often takes place in such contexts due to the assumptions made by the interlocutors that they are all drawing on the same cultural models. It should be

1. See Borofsky (1994) for an account of intra-group diversity in cultural knowledge.

noted, however, that prolonged contact between groups of individuals from different cultural backgrounds often results in the emergence of new, and in a sense ‘blended’, cultural models.

2.5 Emergent cultural cognition and language

Language is intrinsically related to distributed, emergent cultural cognition which has been discussed so far in this chapter. Cultural cognition is largely, but not solely, transmitted through language. Therefore, it is also instantiated in the content and the use of language. Inherent within the system of every language are categories, schemas, conceptual metaphors and propensities for certain perspectives that reflect the cultural cognitions of those who have spoken the language over the history of its existence. As Tomasello (1999: 169) puts it:

[...] in collaboration over historic time human beings have created an incredible array of categorical perspectives and construals of all kinds of objects, events and relations, and they have embodied them in their systems of symbolic communication called natural languages.

Indeed, the way and the degree to which these conceptualisations have been encoded in human languages differ from one language to another (Palmer, 1996). The following section gives examples of how various features of human languages may instantiate conceptualisations that have at one stage or another characterised the cultural cognition of their speakers. At the level of lexicon, lexical devices that are considered to be equivalent in different languages, or even language varieties, may signify different conceptualisation of experience for their speakers. In Chapter 5, for example, I observe that many speakers of Aboriginal English (see Section 4.2 for the definition and description of Aboriginal English) and Australian English associate different conceptualisations with words such as ‘family’ and ‘home’. For Aboriginal English speakers, the word ‘home’ gives rise to conceptualisations that would be associated with the company of the extended family members whereas the Anglo-Australian speakers largely associate the word with a building that is being rented or owned by themselves or a member of their nuclear family. For an Aboriginal person, for instance, the word ‘home’ may refer to the place of residence of one’s grandmother or aunt.

Cultural conceptualisations may also be marked on morphosyntactic features of some languages. Aboriginal Australians have systems of conceptualisation of kinship that are often viewed as complex from the viewpoint of the Anglo-Australian culture. Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations of kinship are encoded in certain morphosyntactic features of Aboriginal languages. For

example, Murrinh-Patha has various second person pronouns including those which categorise family members. These include *nhi* ‘you singular’, *nanku* ‘you two brothers and sisters’ and *nanku ngintha* ‘you two who are not brothers or sisters and one or both are female’ (Walsh, 1993). In Arabana, there are pronouns which signify categories that highlight moiety as well as generation level, such as the following:

Arnanthara = we, who belong to the same matrilineal moiety, adjacent generation levels, and who are in the basic relationship of mother, or mothers’ brother and child. (Hercus, 1994: 117)

In Arabana, this cultural categorisation of kin groups is also marked on second plural kinship pronoun *aranthara* and third person plural kinship pronoun *karanthara*. Another reflection of kinship conceptualisations in the grammar of a number of Aboriginal languages is in the use of collective suffix forms (Dench, 1987). The suffix is described as “a morpheme deriving a new verb lexeme which requires a nonsingular subject and has the added meaning that the activity is performed together by the participants denoted by the subject NP” (Dench, 1987: 325). However, there appear to be cases where the collectiveness denoted by the suffix is more of a marker of kinship rather than of any ‘collective activity’. Consider the following example:

- (1) *Nyiya karlpa-nyayi-ku wiya-larta panti-jangu karnti-ka-ku*
 This climb-COLL-PRES see -FUT sit -REL tree-LOCACC
 ‘This one is climbing up to see that one sitting in the tree.’
 (Dench, 1987: 326)

In the above example, the activity of ‘climbing up’ does not appear to be ‘collective’, at least in the usual sense of the verb, and thus the collective suffix may perform a different function here. Dench maintains that in such cases “*the appearance of the suffix indicates that the participants are in the same set of alternating generations*” [italics original] (1987: 327). That is, the speaker who has uttered sentence (1) above knows that the person climbing up the tree and the one to be seen are relatives in the same set of alternating generations, or people in a ‘harmonious kinship’, as Hale (1966) would put it.

Another area of language that encodes cultural conceptualisations of experience is the area of metaphor (Frank, 2003b; Kövecses, 1999; Kövecses, 2000; Yu, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2004). Yu (2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2004), for example, gives numerous examples from Chinese where the metaphors involving a body part somehow embody Chinese cultural conceptualisations of experience and also of the human body. He maintains the relationship between body, culture and metaphor as “conceptual metaphors are usually derived from bodily

experiences; cultural models, however, filter bodily experiences for specific target domains of conceptual metaphors; and cultural models themselves are very often structured by conceptual metaphors” (Yu, 2003b: 29).

Cultural conceptualisations also provide analytic tools for explorations of pragmatic aspects of language. First, the use of pragmatic devices, such as pragmatic markers, may be associated with culture specific conceptualisations (see Sharifian & Malcolm, 2003: 335). Also, at the heart of the usage of terms such as ‘inferencing’, ‘implied meaning’, etc., lies the notion of ‘conceptualisation’. When we say the use of a certain linguistic device has a given implied meaning, we are in fact referring to conceptualisations that the speaker/hearer associates with the use of the device in a particular context. It is of course well-known in the area of pragmatics that different cultures may have different pragmatic norms and devices and thus it may be stated that across different cultures, different devices might be associated with similar or overlapping cultural schemas and, in some cases, similar devices may give rise to contrasting cultural schemas. At the discourse level, both the content of discourse and its rhetorical organisation may reflect cultural conceptualisations of experience (Malcolm & Rochecouste, 2000; Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002, 2005, 2007). Malcolm and Rochecouste (2000), for example, analysed excerpts of narrative produced by speakers of Aboriginal English and realised that the texts were largely governed by event schemas that reflected Aboriginal cultural experience. They named these schemas Hunting, Travelling, Observing and Encountering the Unknown, which encompasses the Spiritual² experiences of Aboriginal people.

As an example of how cultural conceptualisations may be instantiated in discourse, the following excerpt reveals the way in which three Aboriginal English speakers locate themselves and their interlocutors in terms of their kin:

- L: Armadale you know all the streets an you know where to go?
 EH: I’s It’s not like down the xxxx xxx too many big mob go that way
 M: I’ve got some um people live round Armadale
 EH: In Armadale?
 M: Ah no not Armadale at Perth
 L: [Perth]
 EH: In Perth, what’s the names down there?
 M: um Davises³

2. Words such ‘spirituality’ are likely to evoke conceptualisations in non-Aboriginal people that are not in consonance with the Aboriginal conceptualisations and thus they are often capitalised in this book to remind the reader about this possible mismatch.

3. The names used in the texts are pseudonyms.

- EH: Oh yeah
 M: an Coles
 EH: That's on my Mum's side, my Mum related to Coles
 M: Um do you know, do you know um, Shane Cole?
 EH: Yeah that's my cousin. Mum's cousin I think
 M: We' ah yeah, thas my brother, cousin brother
 EH: Well there's um there's an older one as well isn't there?
 M: Um Donny... and but they're all sisters, um Marcia but we just call her Marce, Marcia Collins an um um Kate and um... um got some Davises um but only just um um from my niece, Jeanette Cole, she goes um horse riding every day um cos she lives with her Nan an Pop an her mother and father cos their mother an dad um lives with them, so she stays with them an, 'cross the road there are these people who that um takes her horse riding
 EH: Oh yeah
 M: Um like on a station, an she just goes with em to um – cos um they signed her in so she could go with em, bout every other– every day
 EH: Yeah we – we were talking about Jim L__ (FAMOUS FOOTBALLER) and the boys said that's your uncle, unna?
 L: mmm
 EH: xxx cos Jim's my cousin xxx I got Elvis in there (laughs) they were saying that, someone was saying that Jim's real name was Elvis (laughs)
 L: Well but e's my uncle but I don't know him
 EH: Alright
 L: He's just know Dad an 'e might be a second cousin or something
 EH: What's your Dad's last name?
 L: Um Gordon
 EH: Oh your Dad's Gordon too what was your Dad's first name?
 L: Gavin Gordon, he was- Dad is um Ronnie Gordon and is brother is Ronnie and Nathan
 EH: I know that, I know that name
 L: Do you know Cherie and Lindy, they Gordon, that's my Dad's sisters
 EH: Alright. What cos my Dad's related to old oh yeah, nah well my Dad- Jim's Mum and my Dad are like brother and sister, an my Dad he got no sisters an they all first cousins
 L: Well what's ya last name?
 EH: Um Haines

(Y70, Yarning about Family)

The above conversation, which is between Aboriginal speakers coming from some 400 kilometres apart, is a clear instantiation of the Aboriginal cultural model of Family. First, the text represents an Aboriginal schema that encourages the speakers to locate themselves and others with regard to their possible kinship links.

This often seems to be necessary among many Aboriginal people in that it has implications regarding where they stand in relation to their interlocutor and what they should do or say.

The text also reveals cases of instantiating Aboriginal cultural categories. For instance, speaker M refers to someone as “brother, cousin brother”. The category ‘cousin-brother’ includes people who are biologically cousin to the speaker but who have the same cultural status as a brother and may simply be referred to as ‘brother’. Speaker L also refers to someone as “uncle” and then proceeds to say that he “might be a second cousin or something”. As mentioned earlier, in Aboriginal cultures the categories that are labelled as ‘uncle’ or ‘aunt’ may include people who may be considered as ‘distant relatives’ from the Anglo Australian perspective. The use of cultural conceptualisations in Aboriginal discourse is discussed in more detail in Part 2 of this book.

As mentioned above, cultural conceptualisations may also be instantiated in the rhetorical organisation of discourse. Carrell calls schemas that include knowledge relative to the rhetorical organisation of a text *formal schemas* (Carrell, 1987:461). She found that reading comprehension was easiest when the texts were familiar to the readers in terms of their cultural *formal* and *content* schemas. Some cultures draw on a formal schema that is tied to the linear conceptualisation of ‘time’. That is, people in such cultures largely narrativise their experience based on the chronological order of the happening of events. Not all cultures, however, follow such patterns of discourse organisation (e.g. Kaplan, 1966, 1987; Kintsch & Greene, 1978). It has been noted, for example, that Kuna Indians of Panama do not construct their narrative structure based on temporal ordering (Sherzer, 1987). In other words, the speakers do not seem to rely on temporal schemas in their narrativisation of experience. Palmer (1996) attributes this to the salience and valuation of the imagery in the narrator’s worldview. Aboriginal English speakers also do not appear to rely very much on the chronological sequencing of the events in their discourse production. Rather, in Aboriginal English discourse, events may be ordered according to their salience and significance in the cultural conceptualisations that speaker is drawing on.

It is to be noted finally that as an integral aspect of cultural cognition, language itself is a complex adaptive system (see also Steels, 1996, 2000) in the sense that it is a distributed, emergent, adaptive system. The knowledge of a language is *heterogeneously distributed* across the minds in a speech community. In a study of mass/count in Persian, for example, Sharifian and Lotfi (2003) employed a Preference task that measured the acceptability of a number of sentences by a group of native speakers of Persian. The data showed a high degree of variability in the degree to which participants rated the sentences as ‘acceptable’. For example,

one of the sentences was rated as 'fully acceptable' by 17.9%, 'acceptable but not preferred' by 32.1% and 'unacceptable' by 50%. This pattern of data shows how knowledge of language is heterogeneously distributed across the members of a speech community.

Also, language is an *emergent* system in the sense that it evolves and hence results from the communicative interactions between the individual members of a speech community across time and space. If we map human communicative interactions onto a network that extends across the dimensions of time and space, then language is the emergent property of the network as a whole. It is to be noted that the interactions that characterise the network are not mirror images of one another, which makes language a dynamic system with unpredictable properties. In the terminology of complex adaptive systems, language is rarely in any long run equilibrium.

Language is a dynamic adaptive system in the sense that it can be adapted to meet the communicative needs of its speakers. At one level, speakers often adapt their language in specific situations to express certain specific meanings. Also, studies in diachronic linguistics have shown that certain features of human languages may be adapted to express a wide range of new conceptualisations. It has been observed that a language implanted in new localities may be adapted and appropriated by its new speakers to express their own native worldview and culture. This has, for example, been observed in the case of Aboriginal people adapting English to clothe their own worldview and cultural conceptualisations (discussed further in Part 2).

2.6 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have made an attempt to further expand the notion of cognition along the dimension of culture. From the perspective that is introduced in this chapter, cognition is viewed as a property of cultural groups, and not just the individual. In this sense, cognition is a heterogeneously distributed system with emergent properties that arise from the interactions between the members of a cultural group. An integral aspect of this view of cultural cognition is group-level conceptualisation. Conceptualisations such as models, schemas and categories have an individual basis as well as an emergent basis as the cultural level of cognition. These cultural conceptualisations are often instantiated in various cultural artefacts and activities. Language in this perspective is viewed as a distributed system as well as a repository for cultural conceptualisations. Various aspects of human languages may encode conceptualisations that reflect cultural experiences of their speakers. The next chapter explores the role of language in cultural cognition.

CHAPTER 3

On collective cognition and language

Is it possible to discover a ‘social or collective memory’ in language (e.g. Climo & Cattell, 2002; Gedi & Elam, 1996; Halbwachs, 1992 [1950])? This chapter discusses one form of collective memory or, more precisely, collective cognition. Western psychology has mainly focused on cognition from the perspective of the individual. Even scholars in the area of social cognition have been interested primarily in perception, processing and representation of social information by individuals. However, a number of scholars have viewed cognition to be a property of groups and not just individual minds (Clark & Chalmers, 1998; Sutton, 2005, 2006; Wilson, 2005). Group-level cognitions are “at once *grounded* in and yet *transcending* the underlying mental states of the interacting agents to which they are collectively ascribed” (Panzarasa & Jennings, 2006: 402).

The particular form of group-level collective cognition that concerns us here emerges from the interactions between the members of a cultural group across time and space, which I refer to as *cultural cognition*. It should be added that my definition of cultural cognition is not limited to capturing culture-specific cognition; rather, it also applies to the fact that different cultural groups may develop similar or partly similar or very different group-level cognition. In fact, the interactions between cultural cognitions of two or more cultural groups may lead to the emergence of new blended cultural cognitions, as stated earlier.

Cultural cognition is *emergent* in the sense that it is a gestalt that is more than the sum of its parts and cannot be reduced to the cognition of a single individual in the group (Beckermann, Flohr, & Kim, 1992). According to the *Dictionary of the Philosophy of Mind* “[p]roperties of a complex physical system are emergent just in case they are neither (i) properties had by any parts of the system taken in isolation nor (ii) resultant of a mere summation of properties of parts of the system” (available online at <http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/emergence.html>). Thus, cultural cognition is not totally captured by focusing on the cognition of an individual member of a group, nor is it the result of a mere summation of the minds in a group. It is the constant communicative interaction taking place between the members of a group that leads to the emergence of a collective, cultural cognition. As Panzarasa and Jennings (2006: 404) put it, “it is the move from agents’ cognition to a social cognitive structure *via social interaction* [italics original] that brings about a new form of collective cognition”. Their view of collective

cognition is similar to the view of cultural cognition presented here in that they maintain “collective cognition is *holistic* in the sense of being essentially macroscopic rather than a mere summation of microscopic local properties” (Panzarasa & Jennings, 2006: 405).

The notion of *emergence* has been employed in describing a wide array of phenomena such as hurricanes, ant colonies, climates, stock markets, etc. (e.g. Johnson, 2001). It has also been used to describe human cognition as emanating from the neural activity in the brain. I find the notion of emergence particularly useful in describing the patterns of cognitive and behavioural life that are often attributed to groups. It should be noted, however, that emergence is still very much a descriptive term and, as such, still in its infancy. Research in the area of computational social simulations seems promising as a means of shedding light on the nature of the emergence of macro-level phenomena from the interactions between micro-level, local agents (e.g. Panzarasa, Jennings, & Norman, 2001).

Cultural cognition, therefore, appears to be a form of *distributed cognition* (Hutchins, 1994) in the sense that the cognitive structures whose interactions lead to emergent properties are *distributed* (albeit *heterogeneously*) across the minds of the members in a cultural group, across time and space (see also Hutchins, 2000).

3.1 Cultural cognition as a complex adaptive system

The properties of cultural cognition outlined above make it compatible with the descriptive approach of ‘complex adaptive systems’ thinking. Complex adaptive systems are studied through complexity science (e.g. Holland, 1995; Waldrop, 1992), a multidisciplinary science which seeks to explain how relationships between parts, or agents, give rise to the collective behaviours of a system or group. This approach to science has provided a useful frame of thinking about many aspects of the universe (e.g. Bak, 1996). In complex adaptive systems the order is emergent and self-organising (Allen, 1997). As explained above, ‘emergence’ in this sense refers to properties that result from the interactions between the agents in the system. ‘Self-organisation’ here means that there is no central control over the behaviour of the individual agents. Complex adaptive systems are also nested and adaptive. Being ‘nested’ means components of complex adaptive systems are themselves complex systems and ‘adaptive’ refers to the ability of the system to ‘learn from experience’, and therefore to evolve.

Cultural cognition, as mentioned earlier, is an emergent system in that it results from the interactions between the members of a cultural group across time

and space. Thus, the emergent properties of cultural cognition as a system at the macro level are not mirror images of those that characterise the cognition of each individual within the group.

A closely related property of complex adaptive systems is that the agents constituting the system cannot contain the whole. Again, in this sense, cultural cognition is also a complex system in that an individual's cognition does not comprise the cultural group's collective and emergent cognition as a whole. Cultural cognition is also nested in that members of a cultural group, as agents of the system, are themselves complex systems, controlled by nervous systems, endocrine systems, etc. As in the case of other complex systems, cultural cognitions have their own unique history of interactions that constantly construct and reconstruct the system. Often, changes in the interactions of cultural groups that may initially be viewed as insignificant have a remarkable influence on the future direction of their cultural cognition. This view is largely reflected in the writings of Vygotsky (e.g. 1978), who viewed cognitive phenomena as embodying the characteristics of historically bound sociocultural relations.

Another characteristic of complex systems is that they are *open systems*, that is, it is difficult to determine their boundaries. They are also open in the sense of their openness to inputs from individual agents, who have a two-fold role in the complex system. On the one hand, the individual is the locus of cognition and can have a causal role in the development, dissemination and/or reinforcement of group-level cognition. On the other hand, an individual's thought and behaviour can be influenced or determined to a varying degree by the cultural cognition that characterises the cultural group. Thus, the role of individuals in a cultural group may best be described in terms of a circular pattern of cause and effect. Panzarasa and Jennings (2006: 402) maintain that "individual cognition is necessary for collective cognition to come into existence: thus the latter is nomologically dependent on the former". However, they observe that collective cognition is "ontologically autonomous", that is, ontologically speaking it has an existence beyond the level of individual cognition.

Cultural cognitions are dynamic in that they are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated across generations and across time and space by members of a cultural group. In this sense, the actions of members of a group constitute a macro-cognitive network that functions as the base for the emergent collective cognition. Because the interactions between the members of a group are not mirror images of each other, the emergent cognition is constantly evolving, making the system adaptive.

3.2 Cultural cognition and cultural conceptualisations

Two intrinsic aspects of cultural cognition are *cultural conceptualisations* and language. As discussed earlier, cultural conceptualisations are the ways in which people across different cultural groups construe various aspects of the world and their experiences. These include people's view of the world, thoughts, and feelings. For example, different cultural groups may conceptualise the origin of the world and their relationships to each other and to nature quite differently. Also, research in cognitive linguistics has shown how the ways in which people 'think about' their thinking and their emotional experiences may differ from one cultural and linguistic group to another (e.g. Enfield & Wierzbicka, 2002; Palmer, Goddard, & Lee, 2003). Traditionally, cognitive scientists interested in cultural differences in cognition, such as cultural psychologists and cognitive anthropologists, have used analytical tools such as 'schema' (e.g. Rice, 1980; Shore, 1996; Strauss & Quinn, 1997), 'category' (e.g. Rosch, 1978), and more recently 'metaphor' (Kövecses, 2005) in accounting for the abovementioned cultural conceptualisations. However, the focus of most research in this area has been the cognition of an individual, rather than the group. Studies in social cognition have also largely employed the notions of 'schema' and 'category' in accounting for people's perception and processing of social information.

I maintain that within the framework of cultural cognition, as sketched out in this chapter, it is equally feasible for us to view schemas, categories, metaphors, etc. as components of cultural cognition. In this sense a cultural schema is an emergent property resulting from the interactions between the members of a cultural group. The cognitive structures (which are themselves cognitive schemas) that give rise to an emergent schema are heterogeneously distributed across the minds in a cultural group. Also, an individual's cognitive repertoire often includes elements from cultural conceptualisations of different cultural groups, depending on the nature of the person's social interactions. In today's globalised world, most people move inevitably between cultural groups and, as such, internalise cultural conceptualisations from more than one group.

At this stage, it should be made clear that the interactions between the group members which give rise to emergent conceptualisations do not take place in an experiential vacuum, but are in fact embedded within the context of their physical experiences. Often, people view various aspects of the environment as *cognitive anchors* for their conceptualisations. For example, Aboriginal Australians have conceptually associated their totemic and cultural stories with aspects of their environment. This has often acted as a basis for considering various aspects of the environment, such as a rock, as 'sacred'.

As mentioned earlier, an important class of cultural conceptualisations is that of cultural categories. Although categorisation seems to be a universal human faculty, the ways in which people across different cultural groups categorise their experiences may differ. We tend to categorise every single entity around us, perhaps to achieve cognitive economy for more efficient cognitive processing. But we also develop cognitive categories that may not have tangible referents in the external world. These include categories such as 'time'. Different cultural groups may not only conceptualise such categories differently but may also use different 'concrete experiences' as the basis for conceptualising these categories. For example, in many industrialised cultures people conceptualise 'time' as a 'commodity', which can be 'saved', 'spent', and 'budgeted'. This phenomenon has been referred to as conceptual mapping or conceptual metaphor in cognitive linguistics.

It should be emphasised again that from a complex systems perspective, cultural conceptualisations operate at two levels: they have a macro-level and a micro-level. They have a macro-level (global level) existence and structure when the unit of analysis is the group, and at the same time they can be viewed as having a micro-level (local level) when the unit of analysis is the individual. This ontological distinction entails different research approaches and methodologies depending on what level is aimed at.

3.3 Cultural conceptualisations and language

Cultural conceptualisations have conceptual existence as well as linguistic encoding. Language is a central aspect of cultural cognition in that it serves as a 'collective memory bank' (Frank, 2003a; wa Thiong'o, 1986) for cultural conceptualisations, past and present. Thus, language is shaped by the cultural conceptualisations that have prevailed at different stages in the history of a speech community and these can leave their traces in current linguistic practice. In this sense language can be viewed as one of the primary mechanisms which stores and communicates cultural conceptualisations. It acts as both a memory bank and a fluid vehicle for the (re)transmission of these socioculturally embodied cultural conceptualisations. Like cultural cognition, language can also be viewed as a complex adaptive system (e.g. Frank, 2008; Steels, 2000). The lexicon of a language is perhaps the most direct link with cultural conceptualisations in the sense that lexical items largely act as labels, and hence 'memory banks', for conceptualisations that are culturally constructed. At least within the circle of cognitive linguistics it is agreed that meaning is conceptualisation, and within the sub-discipline of cultural linguistics (Palmer, 1996) it is further emphasised that conceptualisations are largely

culturally constructed. 'Cultural construction' of conceptualisations refers to the emergent nature of these conceptualisations at the level of cultural cognition. In short, the lexical items of human languages need to be viewed as capturing and storing cultural conceptualisations such as cultural schemas and categories.

Then we find that at the level of grammar, some languages reveal interactions between certain syntactic devices and cultural conceptualisations such as those of politeness and kinship. Murrinh-Patha, an Australian Aboriginal language, uses ten noun classes, which are reflective of Murrinh-Patha cultural classification (Street, 1987; Walsh, 1993). These classes are identified through noun class markers appearing before the noun. The following list includes the class markers and the definition of each category (Walsh, 1993: 110):

1. *kardu*: Aboriginal people and human spirits.
2. *ku*: non-Aboriginal people and all other animates and their products.
3. *kura*: potable fluid (e.g. 'fresh water') and collective terms for fresh water (e.g. 'rain', 'river').
4. *mi*: flowers and fruits of plants and any vegetable foods. Also faeces.
5. *thamul*: spears.
6. *thu*: offensive weapons (defensive weapons belong to *nanthi*), thunder and lightning, playing cards.
7. *thungku*: fire and things associated with fire.
8. *da*: place and season (e.g. dry grass time).
9. *murrinh*: speech and language and associated concepts such as song and news.
10. *nanthi*: a residual category including whatever does not fit into the other nine categories.

The above categorisation also allows for multiple memberships, that is, depending on the function of an entity at the time, it may be categorised into one or another class. For instance, a boomerang may be categorised as *nanthi* when it is used as a back-scratcher and *thu* when it is used as an offensive weapon (Walsh, 1993). Also in the Dreamtime Creation stories, when the Ancestor beings turn into animals in their journey of creating nature, this is signalled by a switch from one noun class to another. This system of noun classification is obviously entrenched in Murrinh-Patha cultural conceptualisations. For instance, as Walsh argues, the fact that fresh water, fire and language have separate classes is an indication that each holds a prominent place in the culture of the Murrinh-Patha. This is a revealing case of how language has acted as a collective memory bank for certain cultural conceptualisations, which may or may not be currently active in the cultural cognition of the group of speakers. Even if they are active at the level of cultural

cognition, they are likely to be heterogeneously distributed across the minds in the group, rather than equally shared between them.

An example of the link between grammar and cultural conceptualisations is found in an entirely different language, namely, Persian, and specifically, in the case of the second-person plural pronoun *shomâ*⁴. This pronoun is used as a second person singular honorific and the third person plural pronoun *ishân* is also used as an honorific for the third person singular. Plurality as a marker of respect is not only marked in the pronoun system but can also be optionally marked by the verb ending. In fact, the interaction between the choice of pronoun, verb ending and the verb can yield a hierarchical system in terms of the degree of respect that each sentence conveys. Consider the following examples:

- (2) a. *in nokteh râ 'u beh man goft.*
 this point DO marker he/she to me said-SG
 b. *in nokteh râ ishân beh man goft.*
 this point DO marker he/she(respect) to me said-SG
 c. *in nokteh râ ishân beh man goft-and.*
 this point DO marker he/she(respect) to me said-PL
 d. *in nokteh râ ishân beh man farmud⁵-and.*
 this point DO marker he/she(respect) to me said-PL
 ‘He told me this point.’

In the examples above the sentences differ in terms of the degree of respect and esteem that one holds for the person being talked about, whether or not the person is physically present when the conversation is being conducted. The degree of respect increases from (a) to (d). Sentence (a) is the most neutral in terms of respect. In (b) the degree of respect is increased by the choice of a plural pronoun for a third person singular case. Sentence (c) conveys a higher degree of respect by adding a plural verb ending while (d) shows the highest degree of respect by choosing the verb *farmud*, which is considered more respectful than *goft*. In addition it brings into play the plural verb ending and pronoun. Thus, in cases such as the above, which abound in Persian, the cultural conceptualisations of politeness are marked in the choice of pronoun, verb and verb ending. It should be added that the choice between the three versions is not a straightforward rule that

4. In Persian transcriptions, the letter “a” symbolises a low front vowel which is close to the sound of “a” in the word “cat”. The symbol “â”, on the other hand, stands for a low back vowel which is close to the sound of “a” in the word “father”.

5. In Persian transcriptions, the use of ‘u’, ‘oo’, or ‘ou’ represent a vowel that is close to /u:/ in English.

can be explicated in one sentence, but in fact requires familiarity with cultural schemas governing communicative interactions between speakers of Persian. The examples discussed so far should suffice to show how grammatical features of a language may be entrenched in cultural conceptualisations.

Another aspect of language that embodies cultural conceptualisations is the use of expressions which include a body part and appear to be metaphoric. In English one finds expressions such as *you broke my heart*, which suggests a conceptualisation of heart as the seat of emotions. As mentioned earlier, many studies have revealed cultural differences in conceptualisations of body parts, in the sense that different body parts may be conceptualised as the seat/centre of thoughts, feelings, courage, etc. These conceptualisations are usually encoded in linguistic expressions that appear to be figurative, particularly if the original sources of the conceptualisations, such as ethnomedical traditions, are not consciously accessible to the speakers.

An example from Chinese comes from Yu (2007) who explores the Chinese cultural conceptualisations of the heart. These give rise to metaphors that profile this internal body organ as a physical entity (e.g. the heart as a container), a part of the body (e.g. the heart as the ruler of the body), and the locus of affective and cognitive activities (e.g. the heart as the house of all emotional and mental processes). Yu observes that the Chinese word *xin* refers to faculties that are covered by the 'heart' and the 'mind' in English. He attributes this to ancient Chinese philosophy in which the heart was conceptualised as the organ for thinking, feeling, will, reason and intuition (Yu, 2008). He further attributes the conceptualisation of the heart as the monarch of the body to traditional Chinese medicine, which is based on the categorisation of five elements. In traditional Chinese medicine the heart is the master of the body and governs various emotional and intellectual activities. As examples of the encoding of this conceptualisation of the heart in the Chinese language, Yu (2007:67) provides the following:

- (3) 愉悦荡心房。

Yiyue dang xin-fang.
joy wave (in) heart-house/room
'Joy rippled in the heart.'

- (4) 进城几年了，乡亲们的嘱托他一直记在心间。

Jin cheng ji nian le, xiangqin-men de
enter city several years per fellow-villagers mod
zhutuo ta yizhi ji zai xin-jian.
advice he always remember in heart-room/inside
'Having lived in the city for several years, he always bears in mind
(lit. in the heart room or inside his heart) the fellow villagers' advice.'

The above examples clearly reflect conceptualisation of *xin* as the seat of both memory and feelings. It is to be added here that although the encoding of the cultural conceptualisations under discussion have remained relatively constant linguistically speaking – with language acting as a memory bank – at the cultural level of cognition, their representation is very likely to be *heterogeneously distributed*. That is, at the level of the individual language agent, Chinese speakers are likely to reveal individual differences in terms of the extent to which they consider the heart as the real seat of thinking and feeling. Some may consider such expressions as merely a matter of figurative language. From the perspective of cultural cognition, what is important is the view that although these conceptualisations originated from traditional medical/philosophical traditions, they have developed an emergent (macro-level) existence, which is the result of the ‘negotiation’ and ‘renegotiation’ of these conceptualisations by Chinese speakers in their communicative interactions across generations and thus across time and space.

I now return to the link between cultural conceptualisations and pragmatics. Cultural conceptualisations closely govern pragmatic meanings and the ways in which speech acts are interpreted. Scholars engaged in research in the area of pragmatics view pragmatic meaning as residing in the knowledge shared between speakers. Moreover, researchers are well aware that pragmatic meanings are subject to cross-cultural differences as well as similarities (e.g. Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Gass & Neu, 1995; Wierzbicka, 1991; Wolfson, 1981). From the theoretical discussion presented thus far in this chapter, it should be clear that the notion of cultural conceptualisations is partly an attempt to provide an account of this supposedly ‘shared cultural knowledge’ that provides a basis for understanding pragmatic meanings across different languages. Within this approach, the notion of ‘sharedness’ is more precisely viewed as ‘heterogeneously distributed’, while ‘knowledge’ is viewed as largely a matter of ‘conceptualisation’.

I maintain that people within a speech community understand implicatures or illocutionary forces of each other’s communicative acts in the light of the cultural schemas and categories that characterise the cultural cognition of the community in question. Naturally when it comes to intercultural communication, differences and similarities between the cultural cognitions of the cultural groups involved may facilitate or debilitate the understanding of pragmatic meanings.

3.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter further elaborates on the author's thinking about the relationship between cognition, culture and language by exploring the notion of cognition as a property of groups, and not just individuals. This group-level, collective cognition is an emergent property of the interactions that take place between members of a cultural group. Two intrinsic aspects of cultural cognition are cultural conceptualisations and language, aspects that are deeply intertwined. Cultural conceptualisations are group-level conceptualisations that are constantly negotiated and renegotiated across time and space by members of a cultural group. These conceptualisations have a micro-level (local) and a macro-level (global) existence. The micro-level cognitive structures are those that characterise the cognition of the individual while the macro-level ones are those which emerge, cumulatively, from the effects of the micro-level cognitions during such communicative interactions. The properties of what is viewed as cultural cognition seem to be in consonance with complex systems thinking in that they reveal emergent properties, they are nested and 'open', and they are also dynamic and self-organising.

Language is a central aspect of cultural cognition in that it serves as a 'collective memory bank' for cultural conceptualisations that have prevailed at different stages in the history of a speech community. Language may best be viewed as a primary mechanism, but surely not the only one, for communicating cultural conceptualisations. This chapter has provided examples from various levels of language and from several languages where different linguistic features and devices appear to be entrenched in the cultural conceptualisations of their speakers. The observations presented in this chapter are meant to provide some preliminary thoughts for further theoretical as well as empirical work in cognitive science that in turn hopefully will allow for fresh insights into the complex relationship between culture and language. It seems that the analytical tools of cognitive science, such as schemas and categories, as well as recent developments in the area of complex adaptive systems can facilitate our understanding of the relationship between culture, cognition and language. The following two chapters present case studies in which the framework of cultural conceptualisations is to explore Aboriginal cultures as they are reflected in Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal English.

PART II

Case studies

Cultural conceptualisations
in Aboriginal languages

CHAPTER 4

Aboriginal language habitat and cultural continuity

Languages are a witness to the ways in which their speakers have conceptualised experience throughout the history of their existence. Conceptualised experience, despite being the result of universal faculties, is of course far from being homogenous in all human beings. People across different cultures appear to employ similar cognitive faculties but to a large degree conceptualise their experience in culturally specific ways. These culturally constructed conceptualisations often motivate language structure differently. That is, differences in language structure, be it syntactic or semantic, may prove to be a result of differences in how speakers across different cultures conceptualise their experience. Methodologically, however, any exploration of language and cultural conceptualisations needs to explicate the two systems separately and then seek correspondences between the two.

The reflection of cultural conceptualisations in linguistic structure is often most apparent to those who study language and cultures that do not descend from the same protolanguages and 'proto-cultures'. Such is often the case for non-Aboriginal anthropologists and linguists studying Aboriginal Australians, and they have generally found Aboriginal languages to be rich repositories of the cultural experiences of Aboriginal people. What is of more interest from a cultural linguistics perspective is how Aboriginal people have managed to continue to express their dynamic cultural conceptualisations in language varieties that developed as a result of their contact with European settlers.

This chapter is an attempt to elaborate on the above two observations with a focus on exploring expressions of cultural conceptualisations of kinship in a number of Aboriginal languages and also in Aboriginal contact varieties. To reiterate, I have employed the term cultural conceptualisations (see Chapter 1) to refer, collectively, to conceptual structures such as schemas (e.g. D'Andrade, 1995; D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Rumelhart, 1980; Shore, 1996; Strauss & Quinn, 1997) and categories (e.g. Lakoff, 1987) that are culturally constructed. Apart from their existence at an emergent level of cultural cognition, cultural conceptualisations may also be instantiated in various cultural artefacts including linguistic expression. Lexical items of human languages are indexes to conceptualisations that are largely derived from the cultural experience of their speakers. As mentioned

earlier, these conceptualisations are constantly negotiated and renegotiated across generations and, as such, are subject to change and expansion, even if the lexical forms remain the same. Many morphosyntactic features of human languages also appear to have been motivated by cultural conceptualisations of their speakers (e.g. Palmer, 1996). The following section now returns to the issue of Aboriginal languages with regard to how they profile cultural conceptualisations of kinship within the small, dense, multiplex speech communities in which they occur.

4.1 Cultural conceptualisations of kinship in Aboriginal languages

Perhaps the entrenchment of cultural conceptualisations in language is most evident in the area of lexical semantics, where lexical items provide an index to conceptualisations that are largely derived from the cultural experience of the users of a given language. The lexical systems of Aboriginal languages, for example, appear to be pointers to conceptualisations that are rooted in Aboriginal worldview and in the historically rich cultural experience of Aboriginal people.

A most striking set of Aboriginal conceptualisations that are encoded in the lexicon of many Aboriginal languages relate to kinship (Heath, Merlan, & Rumsey, 1982). Kinship lends itself to very complex conceptualisations among most Aboriginal Australians in that it often involves systems of categorisation that extend beyond one's extended family. In fact, kin terms may be used by Aboriginal Australians to address all people – and even localities – with whom/which they come into contact (Heath, Merlan, & Rumsey, 1982: 3). Heath, Merlan and Rumsey observe that “most kin terms in Australia are classificatory, and are thus extended in such a way that everyone in the social universe is included within one of the terms” (1982: 5).

Aboriginal people also operate on systems of kinship schemas that are largely distinctive, at least from the perspective of Western cultures. These schemas embody norms and values that relate to various aspects of kinship, such as obligations, responsibilities and respect. Kinship and family relationships are at the core of Aboriginal cultures and many norms of thought and behaviour in Aboriginal Australia revolve around the notions of family relationship (e.g. Keen, 1988). Eades notes that “[w]hen people talk about being Aboriginal, they invariably talk about Aboriginal family relationship. Place of residence, travel, social networks, leisure activities, and personal loyalties all revolve in some way around one's kin ...” (1988: 98).

In this context, what is of particular interest from a linguistic perspective is how some Aboriginal languages encode Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations of kinship in morphosyntactic devices (e.g. Alpher, 1982; Hale, 1966). Hale,

- (8) *Nyiya karlpa-nyayi-ku wiya-larta panti-jangu karnti-ka -ku*
 This climb-COLL-PRES see -FUT sit -REL tree-LOC-ACC
 ‘This one is climbing up to see that one sitting in the tree.’

(Dench, 1987: 326)

In the above example, the activity of ‘climbing up’ does not appear to be collective, at least in the usual sense of the verb, and thus the collective suffix may perform a different function here. Dench maintains that in such cases “*the appearance of the suffix indicates that the participants are in the same set of alternating generations*” [italics original] (1987: 327). That is, the speaker who has uttered sentence (8) above knows that the person climbing up the tree and the one they are going to see are in the same set of alternating generations or in a harmonious kinship, as Hale would put it. It appears that the collective suffix here is associated with certain cultural categories and schemas with regard to a division of labour between people in certain rituals. Dench notes:

... that the division into generation sets reflected in the grammar of the languages is an important principle also reflected in much social interaction within the speech community. During initiation business, the principle defines two groups who interact in a restrained manner but whose members operate as a collective. It is the perception of this contrast between open collective activity and relative restraint that reinforces the division between the two groups, rather than the abstract principle of generation harmony. For the collective suffix to be used to mark this contrast is thus not at all surprising (1987: 333)

A corollary of having complex systems of kin categorisation among Aboriginal people is the need for marking category membership, or non-membership, when addressing interlocutors in a conversation. Due to considerations such as skin classification, a wrong categorisation may lead to adverse consequences. The need for marking kin categorisation is heightened by the fact that conversations among many Aboriginal people usually involve several interlocutors and each turn usually addresses more than one person. In other words, conversations between Aboriginal Australians are predominantly communal rather than dyadic (Walsh, 1991). The presence of several interlocutors would naturally augment the need for making explicit kin categorisations.

Category membership in many Aboriginal languages is reflected in the marking of inclusion/exclusion in their pronoun systems. Warlpiri, for example, makes use of a rather complex pronoun system which also marks inclusion and exclusion, as shown below:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. <i>Ngaju</i> | I | |
| 2. <i>Nyuntu</i> | you | |
| 3. <i>Ngali</i> | you and I | |
| 4. <i>Ngajarra</i> | we two (excl. you) | |
| 5. <i>Nyumpala</i> | you two | |
| 6. <i>Ngalipa</i> | you and I and other(s) | |
| 7. <i>Nganimpa</i> | we (more than 3, excl. you) | |
| 8. <i>Nyurrula</i> | you (more than 3) | (Yallop, 1993:27) |

Another feature of some Aboriginal languages which reflects cultural values attached to family ties is the use of dyadic terms (Merlan & Heath, 1982). A dyadic term captures two or more kin concepts such as father and child. The need for such conceptualisation is that the social reference point in traditional Aboriginal societies tends not to be the individual, as it is in many Western cultures. The minimal unit in any social domain is at least two family members, be it from the extended family or the nuclear family. In Arandic languages of Central Australia the dyadic terms are formed by adding the suffix *-nhenge* to a term that marks the kin relationship (Koch, 2000). An example of this usage in Kaytete is *arlweye-nhenge* 'father and child', where *arlweye* means 'father', and *arrere-nhenge* 'elder sister and younger brother or sister', where *arrere* means 'elder sister'.

Dench (1997) also has documented the use of dyadic and group kin terms in the Aboriginal languages of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. He notes that these terms not only specify the kin relationship that exists between the referents but may also specify the relationship that exists between the speaker and/or the referents. For example, in Panyjima, the word *kurtarra* is used to refer to two brothers who are in the same patrimoiety as the speaker. If the two brothers are in the opposite patrimoiety from the speaker, they are referred to as *partangarra* if they are in the same alternating generation and *yirtangkarra* if they are in the opposite generation (Dench, 1997: 110). The dyad maker suffix in these examples is *-karra* (*garra*).

In addition to dyads, some Aboriginal languages have 'group' formative devices. These may involve a particular suffix that would replace the dyad or a suffix that is added to the dyad suffix. In Panyjima, for example, the suffix *-ngara* is added to a dyad to make it a group term, as in the following:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. <i>kumpali</i> | (cousin) | |
| 2. <i>kumpaliyarra</i> | (two cousins) | |
| 3. <i>kumpaliyarra-ngara</i> | (cousins) | (Dench, 1997:113) |

It is to be noted that the pairs or sets captured in dyadic kin terms express unitary wholes closely bound by family ties into socially recognised units. Such bonding is of course characterised by mutual responsibility and obligation. It clearly reflects the spirit of togetherness which strongly characterises Aboriginal cultures. O'Grady and Mooney note that the usage of the dyad terms that they studied may not even involve two people as such but may instead "denote unity rather than duality or plurality: a single individual with the property of possessing certain kin, or of being in company with certain kin" (1973:9). For instance, they note that the dyad maker suffix was used in a compound to refer to a woman (singular) 'after she has had a child'.

4.2 Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations in English

Upon contact with Europeans in Australia, Aboriginal people adopted English as a means to communicate with each other as well as with the new settlers (see more in Malcolm & Kosciellecki, 1997). Aboriginal people must have realised that the English language spoken by the white settlers did not provide them with all the tools that they needed to express their conceptualisations, such as marking inclusion/exclusion, the way they did in their own languages. However, Aboriginal people somehow managed to continue to express their cultural conceptualisations in the language varieties that were developed out of their contact with Europeans (e.g. Malcolm & Rochecouste, 2000; Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002, 2005; Sharifian & Malcolm, 2003). These contact varieties include Aboriginal Creole varieties and Aboriginal English.

Aboriginal English refers collectively to indigenised varieties of English spoken by Aboriginal Australians. For many speakers of Aboriginal English, this dialect is a successor of Aboriginal languages that are largely extinct now (Malcolm, 2001). As Eades (1991:57) observes, "Aboriginal English is a distinctive dialect of English which reflects, maintains and continually creates Aboriginal culture and identity". Malcolm (2001:217) observes that, "AbE [Aboriginal English] is a symbol of cultural maintenance; it is the adopted code of a surviving culture".

Aboriginal English includes features from Aboriginal languages. However, it should not be simply regarded as a simple mixture of the English and Aboriginal systems, but rather as a dynamic complex system with emergent features that belong neither to the former nor to the latter. Aboriginal English is different from Australian English both at the surface levels of sound and syntax and also the deeper level of semantic content (e.g. Arthur, 1996; Eades, 1991, 1995; Harkins, 1994, 2000; Malcolm, 1994; Malcolm, Haig, Königsberg, Rochecouste,

Collard, Hill, & Cahill, 1999). Malcolm (2001) observes that Aboriginal English is mostly noted for its distinctive phonology by observers. Harkins (2000) notes that Aboriginal English is characterised by a high degree of variation in terms of its sound system. She observes that there is a continuum of accents in Aboriginal English, with a 'heavy' accent at one extreme and a 'light' accent at the other. The 'heavy' accent appears to be close to the sound system of traditional Aboriginal languages and the 'light' accent is close to the sound system of Australian English (Harkins, 2000; Malcolm, 2001). Recent research has shown that various features of Aboriginal English largely instantiate conceptualisations that embody Aboriginal cultural experiences (Malcolm & Rochecouste, 2000; Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002; Sharifian, 2001, 2002a, 2002b; Sharifian, Rochecouste, & Malcolm, 2004). The following sections provide examples of how various features of Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations are entrenched in the conceptual-semantic basis of Aboriginal English.

4.2.1 Conceptualisations and categorisations of kinship in Aboriginal English

Varieties of Aboriginal English encode conceptualisations of categorisations of kinship in varying degrees. Koch (2000) observes that Australian Pidgin marked inclusion/exclusion on its system of pronouns. This includes pronouns such as *mefella* meaning 'I and others excluding you', *mentwofella* meaning 'we two excluding you', *menyou* meaning 'you and I'. The pronoun *menyou*, or one of a number of variant forms of it, is also used today in many varieties of Aboriginal English. Eades also notes that in southeast Queensland Aboriginal English speakers use pronouns such as *you-n-(h)im* to mark second person dual (1988: 100). Such usages provide clear examples of how English forms may be used to encode certain Aboriginal conceptualisations related to kinship.

The use of 'dyadic kin terms' has also been carried over into some varieties of Aboriginal English such as Central Australian Aboriginal English (CAAE). Speakers of CAAE have used *-gether*, a truncated form of the English *together*, as a suffix to express dyadic kin concepts. The CAAE parallels of the dyadic terms discussed above are father-*gether* 'father and child' and sister-*gether* 'elder sister and younger brother or sister' (Koch, 2000).

In other varieties of Aboriginal English, as far as they have been studied, conceptualisations of kinship appear to be mainly embodied in the semantic and pragmatic components. There are, however, cases where an Aboriginal English word would reflect certain morphological processes at work. In Aboriginal English spoken in the south west of Western Australia, for example, the word 'relation'

seems to have been truncated to 'lation' and has been attached to the word 'own' to make 'ownlation' meaning 'one's own relation'. Such simplifications might arise due to a heightened need to refer to relations, or to a need to express a concept that does not exactly fit into the English expressions.

Another set of expressions in Aboriginal English that reflect Aboriginal cultural categories of kinship is the use of compounds such as 'cousinbrother' or 'cousinsister'. These compounds may be used to refer to a cousin who is regarded as belonging in the same category as one's brother or sister and they are usually used with the children of one's mother's or father's siblings. It is to be noted that the use of these terms as forms of address is also associated with schemas of mutual responsibilities and obligations.

The word 'cousin' may also be employed in Aboriginal English to refer to a much wider range of people than it is in Australian English. It appears that this cultural category is based more on the generation level rather than the actual kinship. That is, Aboriginal people might call all the relatives of their own generation 'cousin'. It should be noted again that such kin terms go beyond their usage as terms of address and are usually employed to evoke certain cultural schemas such as that of 'solidarity' in the interlocutors. In one case from the author's experience, for example, the Aboriginal speaker explained that she used the word 'cousin' to express the fact that she was expecting protection and support from her 'distant' relative in a debating situation and also to make the others understand that she was in the company of her 'mob', a term that is used to refer to one's extended family. Eades notes that "[t]he use of the term of address 'cuz' in a meeting or a tutorial in a tertiary institution, for instance, both maintains and reminds Aboriginal participants of a speaker's relationship to another participant and the accompanying rights and responsibilities" (1988: 102).

Among other English terms of kinship that are used to instantiate Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations of kinship are 'aunty' and 'uncle'. The word 'uncle' evokes a cultural category that goes beyond one's parents' brothers and includes people of an older generation that deserve special respect (Eades, 1988). In fact, one's parents' brothers may often be called 'father' (Arthur, 1996). Arthur notes that the term 'aunty' is used to refer to "an older woman, often wise in traditional knowledge, having status within her community" (1996: 71). It is of course to be noted that words such as 'status' and 'traditional knowledge' are very likely to evoke schemas in non-Aboriginal readers that are not in consonance with conceptualisations that are associated with these words in Aboriginal English.

In Aboriginal English, the terms that are used with grandparents in Australian English may also be used to evoke certain Aboriginal conceptualisations. For instance, the words 'grandfather' and 'grandmother' may be used to refer to

grandparents as well as great uncles and great aunts. The terms may also be used with some elderly people of the community (Arthur, 1996). These terms are often more associated with schemas of wisdom and respect than with genealogical relatives.

Often, in Aboriginal cultures the distinction between the mother's side or the father's side becomes more important than whether the person is actually one's 'grandfather' or his brother. Such distinctions may be expressed as reduplications such as 'mum mum'.

Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations of kinship are not just reflected in the use of kin terms in English but also extend to the usage of other devices such as modifiers and prepositions. Arthur notes that in northern Australia a kin relation may be modified by 'little bit' such as in the phrase 'little bit fathers'. Here the modifier may denote a category that includes people from within a totem group who might have married one's mother. Arthur notes that the use of such terms evokes kinship obligations (Arthur, 1996:81).

The word 'near', or 'too near', is also used in some varieties of Aboriginal English to mark certain conceptualisations, for example, if the person referred to as 'mother' is in fact a close relative. 'Too near' might imply that the kinship is such that it would forbid marriage between the two. Another usage of such devices in south west of Western Australia is where sections of a family, from about 40 to 150 people, may be referred to as 'lots' or 'mobs' (Birdsall, 1988:141). In some varieties of Aboriginal English, an ordinal number such as 'second' may be used to denote a category of people to whom one has obligations similar to those who are similarly addressed but without the ordinal number (Arthur, 1996:85). Examples of such usage are 'second father' and 'second mother'.

4.2.2 Aboriginal spiritual conceptualisations in Aboriginal English

Another aspect of the Aboriginal system of conceptualisations which rather strongly informs Aboriginal English is Aboriginal spirituality. Many everyday words in Aboriginal English evoke spiritual experiences that inform the worldview of Aboriginal people. Words such as 'sing', 'smoke' and 'light' may capture spiritual conceptualisations of Aboriginal people. The word 'sing', for example, may be used to evoke a schema that is associated with incantation exercised over a person by getting hold of a belonging of him/her (see more in Section 6.1 in Chapter 6). The word 'light' may also be used in Aboriginal English to refer to a category that includes lights that are associated with certain spiritual experiences. Consider the following example from a narrative by an Aboriginal English speaker in Western Australia:

TEXT Y44 (from the Yamatji Corpus of Aboriginal English)

- 1 A: Oh um my uncle Jim he's at the station
2 and he was driving along from Windmill run,
3 cos he drives that slow,
4 and he still comin back,
5 comin back ome,
6 an e's goin to this one windmill,
7 big mob o emus,
8 seen it,
9 y' know dey got pad
10 goin along de road,
11 an e was drivin along,
12 an an e seen he looked in is revision mirror
13 and big light was behin im,
14 so e didn't worry about it
15 and e jus kept on goin along,
16 an when e looked again
17 it wasn't dere, it was in front of im den,
18 e was driving along
19 and e got to one windmill
20 and bi-i-iggest mob o emus,
21 packed, at that emu,
22 X: yeah you make emu farm outta dat,
23 A: yeah about sixty, seventy.
24 Dey jus all scatter

As can be seen, the speaker makes reference to a 'big light' in line 13 and maintains that his uncle did not worry about the light. This kind of light, often referred to as *min min* light, is associated with various spiritual beliefs among different Aboriginal groups. For example, it is believed that once this light is viewed from an angle, it can reappear from various angles and can mislead a person if it is followed.

Another Aboriginal cultural category that is encoded in Aboriginal English is 'medicine'. Aboriginal English speakers use the word 'medicine' to refer to a range of spiritual powers and experiences. Associated with this category is the use of 'medicine man' to refer to someone with certain healing and spiritual powers. The following excerpt from a conversation between an Aboriginal English speaker and the author shows the use of the word 'medicine' in this sense:

- C: That when ... my mum was real crook and she ... she said, "I woke up an it was still in my mouth ... the taste of all the medicine cause they come an give me some medicine last night an she always tells us that you can't move ... an you wanna sing out an say just ... sorta try an' relax that happened to me lotta times I was about twelve.

In the above excerpt, the speaker retrieves a memory of her mother when she was ill and was given 'medicine' while asleep, by 'them', which refers to the 'spirits' of their ancestors. It is to be noted here that the experiences that are labelled as 'medicine', 'smoke', 'sing', etc. are only defined in a reductionist fashion, as is the case in dictionary writing, and a thorough understanding of such conceptualisations may require long-time exposure to the culture and prolonged interaction with its speakers. The brief explications, however, should suffice in making the point clear about how Aboriginal English speakers may use the words of English to clothe their cultural conceptualisations.

4.2.3 Metaphor in Aboriginal English

In Aboriginal worldviews there is a close connection between land (or nature as a whole), animals and human beings. For instance, for many Aboriginal groups human beings are connected to the land via totemic and spiritual connections that date back to the Dreamtime. This phenomenon has been well documented by anthropologists throughout the history of European settlement in Australia.

The interconnection between land, animals and people in Aboriginal conceptual systems is entrenched in a set of interlocking conceptual mappings linking one area to another, which is reflected in Aboriginal English metaphors. For example, Aboriginal English speakers may map from the conceptualisations of kinship onto the domain of land and therefore refer to part of their 'country' as 'grandfather' (Arthur, 1996: 122). Consider the following excerpt:

I die and put my bones in cave or earth. Soon my bones become earth, all the same. My spirit has gone back to my country, my mother. (Neidjie, 2002: 54)

Here, the underlying metaphor may be formulated as LAND IS KIN. Arthur (1996) observes that "this use, and the other family terms applied to material objects in one's country, underline the intense relationship of person and place" (p. 122). In this context, an Aboriginal English speaker may use the phrase 'grow up the country' to mean 'care for the country'.

It should be added here that the conceptual mappings discussed above do not appear to be merely linguistic, such as the ones that characterise literary works, but largely extend to the conceptual level. That is, the use of kinship terms in referring to one's country is not merely a matter of labelling. Rather it arises out of a system of conceptualisation that underlies the Aboriginal Dreamtime. For example, one view, explained in Section 1.5.1, is that during the Dreamtime, Ancestor Beings, who were an amalgam of animal and human forms, travelled the land creating landforms and laying down the customs, and at the end they became transformed into features of the landscape in the shape of stones, trees, etc. (e.g. Bain, 1992; Elkin, 1969; Stanner, 1965, 1979; Strehlow, 1978). Thus, the land now embodies the 'spirits' of Ancestor Beings and, as such, is connected to people via kinship. Smith (2004: 4) observes that

within the Indigenous Australian cosmos, power flows from inherently powerful ancestral beings to the land, which is imbued with a potency given to it by the actions of people and ancestors in the past. In this way, every facet of the landscape becomes imbued with ancestral associations and ascribed with social identity. This power flows through to living people, some of whom have the ability to call upon the force and authority inherent in both the land and the ancestral beings.

Clarke (2003: 34) also notes that "kinship ties are also established through totems, those Dreaming Ancestors who are considered to have genealogical links to living people. This means that all natural and super-natural phenomena that together form the Dreaming are categorised among kin".

Associated with the conceptualisation of LAND AS KIN are the conceptualisations of LAND AS A LIVING BEING, or LAND AS A PERSON. As Baines (1988: 228) puts it, "to look at the land through Nyungar [An Aboriginal group in Western Australia] eyes is to perceive personhood in all life-forms ... The land is seen as huge body – most often it is recognised as the body of one's mother". Some Aboriginal groups speak of land in terms of attributes such as speaking and listening. Some Aboriginal groups, for example, speak to the land when hunting animals. This may involve apologising for taking away what belongs to the land while promising that they only take as much as they need for food.

Another related conceptualisation in this context is that of land speaking to people by providing them with different signs, for example, about where to find food, etc. As mentioned above, one of the central conceptualisations that characterises the Aboriginal worldview of the Dreaming is the union of Ancestor Beings and the land, which may be formulated as ANCESTOR BEINGS ARE PART OF THE LAND. This conceptualisation underlies an entire discourse about aspects of the

environment where phenomena such as raining and falling of a tree are attributed to Ancestor Beings. Consider the following excerpt from a conversation between an Aboriginal English speaker and the author:

- C: that, that rain, the rain 'ere, the angry rain, das when some, you done some-thin or someone's done somethin, that did bad an it's like it's not rainin and it comes and it's like bangin, loud, sort of lashin, makes the trees go shshsht, you know, hittin out that sort of rain an it can come out like that but then you find out after someone doin somethin, and you go thas what it was...

Here the speaker is explaining what she calls "angry rain" as an expression of the anger of Ancestor Beings, or what the speaker referred to as "old fallas". According to this conceptualisation of RAIN AS THE ANGER OF SPIRIT BEINGS, the anger is likely to have been caused by a wrongdoing, or something not in consonance with Aboriginal Law, such as trespassing into a 'country' that is not one's own. Overall, it can be seen that Aboriginal English encodes conceptual mappings that are entrenched in Aboriginal worldview and Aboriginal cultural cognition.

The conceptualisation of ANCESTOR BEINGS AS PART OF THE LAND may also play a role in an Aboriginal person's view of himself/herself, which can be formulated in a syllogism as follows:

ANCESTOR BEINGS ARE PART OF THE LAND
I AM PART OF ANCESTOR BEINGS

Therefore, I AM PART OF THE LAND

As mentioned earlier, according to the worldview of the Deamtime, Ancestor Beings returned to the land in the form of stones, trees, etc. after the Creation. Therefore they are now considered as part of the land, and since according to the same worldview, an Aboriginal person is an extension of his/her Ancestor Beings, the land is conceptualised as embodying the person. This set of conceptualisations underlies the use of Aboriginal English sentences such as "This land is me".

It must be emphasised that the above-discussed conceptualisations are not part of an old and abandoned system but have relevance to Aboriginal people living in today's Australia (e.g. Ansara, 1989; Shaw, 1986). As Clarke (2003:16) puts it, "although it refers to past events, Dreaming knowledge still is of immense importance to present-day Aboriginal people for understanding the world".

4.3 Concluding remarks

The chapter began by putting forward the premise that human languages are largely, but not solely, grounded in human cultural experience. If this is a legitimate observation, it would not then be surprising to find parallels to the cultural experiences of their speakers in the structure of different languages. In this chapter, I have tried to show first of all how certain features of a number of Aboriginal languages reflect Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations of kinship. Further, I have provided examples from some contact varieties, which clearly reveal how Aboriginal people have employed various features of their English-based varieties to continue to instantiate their dynamic, cultural conceptualisations. My general contention about the relationship between language, culture and conceptualisation may be summarised as follows: language users largely employ various elements of their languages to instantiate their cultural conceptualisations.

Cultural conceptualisations in English words

A study of Aboriginal children in Perth

5.1 Standard vs. 'non-standard' varieties: Underlying cultural models

In many parts of the globe, students who speak 'non-standard' varieties are disadvantaged as a result of the way they speak. Most educational systems idealise 'standard' varieties and promote them as part of a package for a better life. These standard varieties are usually put forward as a replacement for, and not a complement to, the 'non-standard' varieties that students bring to school.

The above position is a realisation of a much wider cultural model that is referred to as 'the rationalist cultural model' of language. This model views languages as a medium of 'participation' and 'emancipation', and also views 'standard' dialects as playing a key role in providing access to the world of learning and higher culture. Geeraerts (2003) contrasts this model of standardisation with the 'romantic' model, which considers 'standard' varieties to constitute instruments of oppression and exclusion.

The educational systems in Australia largely subscribe to the rationalist model and promote the learning of Standard Australian English as the key to 'participation and success in wider society' among Aboriginal students. This is, however, generally done with the implied ideology that the 'home' dialect that many Aboriginal students speak, that is Aboriginal English, is a deficient variety, which according to the rationalist model needs to be eradicated.

Thus far, the argument is classic and clear. There are, however, contexts in contemporary Australia in which some Aboriginal children appear to have adopted most of the phonological and grammatical features of Australian English to express their Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations. This phenomenon is masked from some non-Aboriginal educators due to the fact that surface linguistic features are usually taken as the sole indicator of the language variety one speaks. This often leads non-Aboriginal teachers who are unaware of the mismatch of cultural conceptualisations to place the same expectations on these students as are placed on those who speak Australian English as their first dialect.

The above observation acted as an incentive for the author to move beyond the levels of phonology and grammar to explore which conceptualisations a number

of English words would evoke in two groups of Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian students. This chapter provides a partial account of the study and briefly explores the educational implications of the findings.

5.2 Empirical investigation of Aboriginal cultural models

In general, empirical investigations of Aboriginal cultural models embodied in Aboriginal English can contribute to our understanding of the relationship between language and cultural conceptualisation of experience. It can also provide insights that would reduce the potential for miscommunication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal speakers in various settings from the court to the classroom. The study reported in the following section is a step in this direction.

Aims

This study aimed at highlighting group-level conceptualisations that would emerge from the patterns of response by two groups of Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian students to a set of English words in a word association task. The following section elaborates on the methodology that was employed to carry out the study.

5.3 Methodology

The study employed an ethnographic approach to the analysis of word associations. Word association has so far been mainly used in quantitative studies of cognitive structures of various kinds. In this study the procedure was partly modified to suit the qualitative analysis targeted to explore cultural conceptualisations. The investigation was composed of two phases: the 'association' phase, in which a number of English words were used as prompts to evoke conceptualisations in the participants, and the 'interpretation' phase, in which the associative responses given by the participants were analysed for the cultural conceptualisations that they appeared to instantiate. The methodology may therefore be labelled *Association-Interpretation*.

The rationale for the recruitment of this method was that in a word-association task, the stimulus words appear to be able to elicit responses that reflect associative links in the conceptual system. These associative links are usually formed as a result of cognitive processes such as schematisation and categorisation. Thus, associative responses to a stimulus word should largely reflect elements and aspects of conceptualisations in an individual's conceptual system. When the task is administered to cultural groups, similarities and clusterings in associative

responses are very likely to reflect *cultural* conceptualisations. Identification of cultural conceptualisations in associative responses need to be informed by *emic* (i.e. insider's view) sources. The following sections elaborate on how such a methodology was employed in this study.

5.3.1 Participants

A group of 28 Nyungar, 1 Yamatji, and 1 Yamatji/Nyungar Aboriginal students from three metropolitan primary schools in Western Australia participated in this study. The students were from various grades, ranging from Grade 1 to Grade 7. The majority of Nyungars and Yamatjis speak English as their first language. A group of 30 non-Aboriginal Anglo Australian students also participated in this study as a reference group.

5.3.2 Instrument

A list of 32 words⁶ was prepared to be administered as part of the Association-Interpretation technique. The words, from everyday words of English that would be familiar to students across the two groups, were chosen with the help of an Aboriginal and an Anglo-Australian research assistant. The first two words were used as warm-up trials to establish a response mode in the participants and also to make sure that the participants understood the task.

5.3.3 Procedure

The investigator collected the word association data from the participants at school and in the presence of an Aboriginal Islander Education Officer (AIEO), who helped with the administration of the task. The participants were briefed by the AIEO, who also assured them that the test was a group test and not a measure of individual performance.

The stimuli were presented orally and the responses were also required to be oral. The participants signalled the end of each response set, through utterances such as 'That's it'. Previous studies of word association mostly confined the length

6. Word list: 1 – Learn, 2 – Tree, 3 – Aboriginal, 4 – Home, 5 – Food, 6 – People, 7 – Fight, 8 – Family, 9 – Country, 10 – Fun, 11 – Australia, 12 – Camping, 13 – Story, 14 – Birds, 15 – Animal, 16 – Mum, 17 – Dream, 18 – Watching, 19 – Take-away, 20 – Walk, 21 – Deadly, 22 – Park, 23 – White, 24 – Shame, 25 – Life, 26 – Lovely, 27 – Important, 28 – Kangaroo, 29 – Smash, 30 – Speaking, 31 – Hunting, 32 – Going out.

of the responses to single words. Such a procedure could mask significant information regarding conceptual structures that would in fact be reflected in larger units of languages. In this study, there was no limit imposed on the length of the responses given by the participants. Previous studies of word associations mostly revealed a tendency for reducing to numbers the responses elicited, a technique that does not appear to be maximally beneficial in terms of examining conceptualisations that underlie the use of language.

The stimulus words were presented in a different random order for each participant, and the responses were recorded using a cassette note-taker. The task was made more interactive by either the investigator or the AIEO occasionally asking the participants to elaborate on their responses, at the end of a trial. The data collected were transcribed by the investigator and then subjected to the interpretive analysis.

5.4 The analysis of the data

The study employed an ethnographic approach to the analysis of the responses given by the participants. The analysis viewed the responses in the context of conceptualisations that they appeared to instantiate. These conceptualisations were identified through what might be described as 'triangulated interpretation', drawing on a synthesis of several sources of information, such as the intuition of the participants and/or other members of the cultural group, a survey of the relevant published literature, and the expertise/intuition that the researcher has gained as a result of fieldwork and research. These sources of knowledge were employed in identifying conceptualisations that were reflected in the associative responses given to the stimuli.

5.5 Findings of the empirical investigation

Overall, the responses from the participants did not reflect conceptualisations that would be equally and totally shared by all the members of each cultural group. This observation provides support for the view that cultural conceptualisations are represented in a 'heterogeneously distributed fashion' across a cultural group. However, viewed from a conceptual perspective, the data suggested the operation of two distinct, but overlapping, conceptual systems among the two cultural groups participating in this study. The two systems are integrally related to the dialects spoken by Aboriginal and Anglo-Australians, that is, Aboriginal English and Australian English. The discrepancies between the two systems appear to be rooted in the cultural systems that underlie many features of these dialects while

the overlap between the two conceptual systems appears to arise from several phenomena, to be discussed later in this chapter.

A large number of responses from the participants in the two groups revealed conceptual discrepancies that seem to arise from associating different cultural conceptualisations with the same English word-form.

Table 1 presents some examples from the data from the two groups.

Table 1. Responses from Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian participants to the stimulus word ‘shame’

Aboriginal	Anglo-Australian
Stimulus word: Shame	Stimulus word: Shame
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Shame of someone you haven't seen before, some of your people you're shame of them, [F: What? AIEO: Shame of people you haven't seen for a while, unna? I: for a long time], shame of someone that you haven't seen.</i> • <i>You're shame of other people, shame of animals.</i> • <i>When you're shy, when you're first to the school or to a holiday and you go to your friends and you're shame and you're not shy.</i> • <i>Shame from the teacher, shame from your mum and dad [AIEO: Why would you be shame from your mum and dad?]</i> • <i>I: I dunno. AIEO: Do you feel scared or shy? I: shy].</i> • <i>When I don't know someone and I have to shake their hand and it's shame.</i> • <i>I get shame when I see anybody else.</i> • <i>When you meet somebody that you might like or something, sometimes it's a bit shame when you walk in a place and there's a lot of people sitting down watching you</i> • <i>And I'm shame when I'm going to go on a ride, my sister goes but I don't want to, it's too shame, AIEO: What ride, like a show or something. I: yeah, people stare at me</i> • <i>When you're dancing or singing, or it's your first coming to school.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Guilt, honesty.</i> • <i>Something that can be pretty embarrassing, you don't wanna do sometimes.</i> • <i>Disorder and annoying, naughty, thinking about what you did.</i> • <i>Sad, heartbreak.</i> • <i>Disappointed, not happy.</i> • <i>Unhappy, scared, talking, you're shame to talk to people.</i> • <i>You're shamed of yourself because you've done something really strange or people just angry at you.</i> • <i>Shame you don't play with anyone, shame you don't go anywhere, shame you don't get a lollypop.</i> • <i>I do something wrong and I blame myself.</i> • <i>It's like when you lose then you have to walk of shame because you didn't win, and shame when you're being bad.</i> • <i>Feel sorry for yourself.</i> • <i>You've done something wrong, you feel guilty, walking in front of a crowd and you're a little shame.</i> • <i>Like when I've done something really bad and I feel like real bad.</i> • <i>I think of being embarrassed, I think of losing, every single time I go on a race or something, X told me there's another reason for shame in the Aboriginal language but I forgot it, it was like scared I feel like being scared too.</i>

The associative responses in Table 1 clearly instantiate different cultural schemas associated with the word 'shame'. The responses from the Aboriginal participants largely instantiate the Aboriginal schema of Shame, which embodies knowledge and emotions associated with situations in which a person is singled out from the group, for either praise or punishment. It is also associated with the respect one has for parents, elders, sacred places, etc. (see further in Harkins, 1990). Novelty of experience is also another factor which often leads to the discomfort expressed as 'being shame' by Aboriginal people. For Anglo-Australian participants, the word 'shame', however, appears to have largely evoked schemas that are associated with 'wrong-doing' and 'feelings of guilt'.

The analysis of the responses also reveals that even some basic words such as 'home', 'people' and 'family' often evoked cultural conceptualisations that distinctively characterise each group of participants. A large number of responses reveal that for Aboriginal participants, the word 'family' evoked cultural conceptualisations that are associated with their extended family members and the responsibilities that they have towards them. Consider the examples in Table 2.

It can be seen that the responses given by Aboriginal participants refer to the members of their extended family, such as aunts and uncles, and, as such, they instantiate the Aboriginal cultural schema of Family. The responses from the Anglo-Australian participants suggest that the word 'family' has in most cases been associated with a schema that includes the members of what might be described as a 'nuclear family', including sometimes the pets kept in the house.

Responses such as *they're there for you, when you need 'm they look after you* by Aboriginal participants reflect responsibilities of care that are usually cherished between the members of an extended family. Uncles and aunties often have a big share in one's upbringing. The closeness of an Aboriginal person to his or her extended family members is also reflected in the patterns of responses where the primary responses refer to uncles and aunties or nana and pop instead of father and mother. Responses such as *my million sixty one thousand family* and *I've got lots of people in my family* reflect the extended coverage of the concept of 'family' in Aboriginal conceptualisation.

Many responses from the Aboriginal children to the word 'home' referred to the members of their extended family and some responses referred to family obligations, whereas the Anglo-Australian children mainly referred to parts of the building where they resided and commodities such as the TV. The patterns of response from the two groups are in consonance with cultural models of Home in the two cultures.

The Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations of Home are different from the Anglo-Australian conceptualisations of Home in several respects. The category

Table 2. Responses from Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian participants to the stimulus word ‘family’

Aboriginal	Anglo-Australian
Stimulus word: Family	Stimulus word: Family
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Love your pop, love your nan, love our mums, love our dads.</i> • <i>Brothers, sisters, aunnie, uncles, nan, pops, father, nephew and nieces.</i> • <i>They're there for you, when you need 'm they look after you, you call 'm aunie and uncle an cousins.</i> • <i>People, mums, dads, brother, group of families, like aunties and uncles nanas and pops.</i> • <i>I've got lots of people in my family, got a big family, got lots of family.</i> • <i>My family, you know how many family I got? one thousand millions, Hundered ninty nine million thousand thousand nine nine sixty one ... million million, uncle, Joe, Stacy, ... cousins, uncles, sisters, brothers, girlfriends and my million sixty one thousand family</i> • <i>Ilike my family, all of my family, my aunties an uncles and cousins, and I like Dryandra.</i> • <i>Just having family that is Nyungar [an Aboriginal cultural group] and meeting each other</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You got brothers and sisters in your family and your mum and dad, and you have fun with your family, have dinner with your family, you go out with your family.</i> • <i>Dad, mum, brother, dog.</i> • <i>Mum, and dad, brother, and sister.</i> • <i>Fathers, sisters, parents, caring.</i> • <i>People, your mum and dad, and your sister and brother.</i> • <i>All my family, my brothers and sisters, my mum and my dad.</i> • <i>Kids, mums, dads, sisters, brothers.</i> • <i>Mother, sister, brother, life.</i> • <i>Mum, dad, my brother.</i> • <i>I think of all the people in my family [F: Who are they? I: My mum, my dad, an my sister]</i> • <i>Theyhave a house, they have a car, they have their kitchen, their room, their toilet, their backyard, their carport, they have a dog and a cat.</i>

of ‘home’ for Aboriginal people is of much broader scope in the sense that ‘home’ conjures up all the places where one usually stays, such as the houses in which members of one’s extended family live. Thus, the houses that ‘belong’ to one’s aunty or uncle may be considered as one’s ‘home’. Where Aboriginal people live next to each other, the concept of ‘home’, therefore, may extend to part of a suburb.

For many Aboriginal people, the word ‘home’ is associated with conceptualisations that profile the company of the extended family rather than a building and its contents. These conceptualisations are reflected in the following responses from three Aboriginal participants to the word home.

1. Stimulus: Home**Response:**

mum and dad, sisters an' aunnies, an' uncles an' aunnies, and cousin,
an' brothers.

Families.

I play playstation, I play Nintendo, I play 64, wrestling,

F: (the researcher): you do wrestling at home?

P: (the participant): yeah

F: with whom?

P: my brothers and my cousins and tonight tonight umm if you ask me the
question about who's sleeping over, ask me that, say it.

F: who's sleeping over?

P: my cousins, Stacy⁷ and Broklin, she's Aboriginal, you know Beki?, you
know Robbie?

F: they're coming over?

P: yeah, and Kyle, they are my cousins.

For many Aboriginal people, the concept of 'home' may not be a bounded space. That is, the whole space in the house may often be shared by people who 'stay', in the Aboriginal sense, in the house and every person may not be given a dedicated room. Aboriginal children may stay up late playing with their cousins and sisters and brothers. There may not be a set time for various events happening in the house such as dinner, the TV, bed, etc. This in fact appears to be associated with the cultural lifestyle and norms, in the context of which it is not at all a deficiency. Aboriginal people often view putting children into their rooms at a set time and for a set period of time in darkness a 'cruel' act, when they are asked to treat their own children that way (Glenys Collard, personal communication). Several associative responses, such as the following, from the Aboriginal participants referred to 'keeping the house clean':

2. Stimulus: Home**Response:**

do dishes, cleaning up, be kind at home, sweeping, cleaning the table,
cleaning the lounge room, cleaning your room, cleaning the laundry
an' the bathroom.

cleaning up at home.

keep your house clean, healthy.

you look after it.

7. The names used in the data are pseudonyms.

Several Aboriginal people suggested that the above responses might reflect reminders to Aboriginal children by their family members that they need to keep the house clean and tidy otherwise ‘they’ [government authorities] would come and take them. If this is so, it is in fact associated with conceptualisations of ‘stolen generation’, which captures the sad events occasioned by the policy of the often forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their parents by government authorities prior to putting them into white institutions.

The Aboriginal cultural model of Home also embodies schemas that are associated with norms regarding responsibilities assumed by each member of the family within the context of ‘home’. Overall, there is an emphasis in Aboriginal cultures on imparting a sense of self-reliance to children as soon as possible. Assistance, if needed, may be sought from older brothers and sisters, rather than from adults (Dunn, 2001; Malin, 1997). This is to give older children a chance to experience a sense of responsibility. Of course ‘self-reliance’ as favoured by Aboriginal families is embedded with ‘group-orientedness’. In other words, a person is encouraged to be self-sufficient but at the same time to attend to the needs of other members of the ‘mob’ and share willingly. This norm of conduct may be captured in a proposition schema which may be partly explicated as follows:

It’s good to be self-reliant but also help others, especially younger members of the family, if they need it.

Malin describes this schema as follows:

Parents would allow their children both time and space to tackle new tasks and situations cautiously so to avoid making mistakes, and they would expect them to be both emotionally and physically resilient. To balance this independence, the parents encouraged their children to be affiliative – that is, to be affectionate and nurturant with those younger than themselves, to maintain an awareness of the whereabouts of everyone, to help those needing it and to trust that their peers will be similarly dependable. (Malin, 1997: 143)

The following responses from a six-year-old Aboriginal child instantiate the abovementioned schema. In particular they suggest that Aboriginal children may assume the role of a carer for younger children from a very early age:

Stimulus: Home

Response:

– help them put their clothes on and their shoes.

F: help who?

AIEO: What people do you help put on their shoes?

P: Katy (sister’s name) and my cousin.

The associative responses from the Anglo-Australian participants largely instantiate a cultural model of Home in which everyone is allocated a separate bedroom and children spend a lot of time in their 'own' bedroom playing games. Unlike a good number of responses from Aboriginal children that refer to the members of the extended family, the responses from the Anglo-Australian students referred to different parts of their place of residence, activities carried out in the house, commodities such as the TV, and to a much less degree to the members of the nuclear family. Consider the following responses from several Anglo-Australian participants:

Stimulus: Home

Response:

- home you can sleep in, you can you can put your stuff in your house, you can have a dinner in your house, lunch, play Sony, have fun.
- bedroom, bed, backyard, shed, driveway, ceiling, garden.
- my nice bed, that's nice and soft and I like going to sleep, because I just like going to sleep, and I think about my family at home, an my cat [F: who's your family? I: my mum, my dad and my sister].
- my bedroom, kitchen, and the dining room.
- dog, person, a bed.
- is where I go every time I finish school, where I can sit down relaxed lay on my bed, and do whatever I want, whenever I want, I don't have to live up to the standard or anything at home like at school, so I can basically relax.
- has a roof, doors, carpet, trees at the back, tiles, and carpet, the kitchen, the rooms, beds, lights, clocks.
- it's a good place, play different games, TV, hobbies.
- it's like Nintendo, mainly my mum and dad big hug and kisses.
- place where I live, place where I go to have food an' drink.

It can be seen that a good number of these responses refer to different parts and sections of the houses, specifically the participant's bedroom. It can also be seen that in terms of the activities carried out in the house, the responses mainly refer to 'eating', 'sleeping', and 'playing games'. People, if ever mentioned, are those of the nuclear family such as 'mum' and 'dad'. Apart from these differences, there are some elements common to the Aboriginal and the Anglo models of Home, which are reflected in various responses. The home model of many people from other countries may not include 'backyard', 'front-yard', 'shed', 'lounge', and 'laundry'.

By examining/analysing the response of the Aboriginal participants in this study, it is possible to accumulate evidence of what may be broadly termed an *Aboriginal conceptual system*, and to establish that this Aboriginal conceptual system strongly revolves around cultural conceptualisations of Family, which underpin

Aboriginal behaviours, thinking, and speaking. Eades observes that, “[w]hen people talk about being Aboriginal, they invariably talk about Aboriginal family relationships” (Eades, 1988: 98). In terms of categorisation, Aboriginal people usually categorise their kin differently from Anglo-Australians. The category of ‘mother’, for instance, may extend further than one’s birth mother to include aunts and even one’s grandmother. In terms of schematisation, Aboriginal cultural schemas of Family derive from pervasive life experience in the company of extended family members, where norms of conduct, obligations and responsibilities, norms of sharing, norms of respect and a lot more are learnt. These cultural conceptualisations are handed down from one generation to another and transmitted from one place to another, keeping traditional Aboriginal conceptualisations alive across time and space. This enables them to survive even when people are exposed to the norms of non-Aboriginal conceptualisations in a potentially overwhelming way.

Other conceptual discrepancies found in the responses from the two groups include several Aboriginal students categorising ‘kangaroo’ as ‘food’ or ‘hunting game’ while Anglo-Australian participants categorised it mainly as an animal. Stimulus words such as ‘deadly’ and ‘camp’ were associated with different concepts across the two groups. ‘Deadly’ evoked in Aboriginal participants a concept which may be glossed in Australian English as ‘fantastic’ and ‘great’, but the concept which emerges from the majority of the responses given by Anglo-Australian participants appears to be synonymous with ‘dangerous’ and ‘poisonous’.

As mentioned earlier, a number of responses across the two groups of participants suggested an overlap in the conceptualisations that were instantiated through the associative responses. The overlapping conceptualisations may be attributed in various degrees to several sources including the following:

- experience in similar physical environments (i.e. school, park, etc.);
- membership in the same age group level;
- access to ‘modern’ lifestyle;
- access to school materials;
- contact resulting in *conceptual seepage*.

As was observed in the analysis section, some responses from both groups referred to various aspects of school, shops, parks, etc. It is not surprising to observe such similarities. In fact, whoever lives in Perth and has access to parks, shopping centres, etc. will in time form similar schemas of these places from their experiences. Nevertheless, subtle differences were observed between the two groups with respect to schemas associated with the words ‘school’, ‘park’ and ‘shops’. The responses from the Aboriginal participants, for example, consistently reveal that physical environments mainly act as a base for profiling the cultural schema of Family. It seems that it is the company of the extended family that gives

significance to an event, not the setting of the event or even the event itself. This is shown by the fact that Aboriginal people often refer to localities and suburbs in terms of which family and 'mob' resides in them rather than where they are located in relation to the river, the city centre, or other suburbs.

Another set of responses that appeared to be similar across the two groups reflected cultural conceptualisations developed from the characteristic interests and practices of school age children. It was observed that playing certain games and watching certain TV programmes were considered by the participants across the two groups to be 'fun'. Members of other age groups will not necessarily find such games and programmes entertaining. This means that two different age groups, even from the same culture, may have different schemas of 'fun'. In other words, conceptual overlapping may derive from sharing various sub-cultures, such as the culture of an age group rather than anything else. It was again observed that there might be certain differences in the default elements of the schemas that each group operate on. For Aboriginal children, for instance, it appears that the company of 'siblings' and 'cousins' is a default element in having fun experience but this does not appear to be so for Anglo-Australians. Note that the words 'siblings' and 'cousins' in the Aboriginal sense may even refer to second cousins and more 'distant' relatives.

Some of the responses from the two groups were associated with cultural conceptualisations reflecting aspects of the 'modern' lifestyle, such as 'having fast food' and 'playing computer games'. A number of responses from both groups – more from Anglo-Australian participants – revealed conceptualisations derived, it would appear, from school materials or from the mass media. In other words, these conceptualisations appear to be school-based or TV-based and often relate to mediated rather than first-hand experience.

The influence of school in forming conceptualisations appears to extend to the formation of other images and schemas about events and people. Several responses from both groups, for example, might be motivated by the way Aboriginal people are often portrayed in school materials and in the media, for example, as 'black people living in the past or in the bush making boomerangs and spears'.

A good number of responses that appeared to be similar across the two groups suggest the likelihood of what might be called *conceptual seepage*, or permeation of conceptualisations from one group to another. Several Anglo-Australian participants, for instance, gave responses to words such as 'shame' and 'smash' that appeared to be associated with Aboriginal cultural schemas. Such permeations, which may take place either consciously or subconsciously, largely appear to be the result of contact between the speakers of the two dialects. Conceptual permeations may also be motivated by issues of identity, group membership, and the disarming of adversity.

Another important pattern that was detected when analysing the responses of the two groups was that their speech was not drastically different in terms of accent. Equally, as far as it could be determined from the size of responses, there did not appear to be substantial differences between the syntactic structure of the responses across the two groups. Consultation with the AIEOs participating in this study suggested that while some of the Aboriginal participants simply switch accent from the Aboriginal English they use outside to Australian English in classroom situations, others have incorporated the sounds and the syntax of Australian English into their dialect and they in fact sound as if they speak Australian English. That is, while some participants code-switch in educational contexts, others have acquired the sounds and the syntax of Australian English as part of their first dialect. The lack of an identifiable Aboriginal accent usually leads non-Aboriginal teachers to assume that such students are fully fluent speakers of Australian English, meaning that they share the same cultural schemas. Certain expectations to behave in ways predicted by the teachers' norms are accordingly placed upon them.

In this respect, from the data obtained in this study the following conclusion can be drawn: while the students from the two groups did not sound markedly different, they often drew on conceptualisations characteristic of two distinct cultural groups, speaking two distinct dialects. That is, it appears from the data analysed in the present study that distinctiveness of dialect in this situation largely emerges at the level of cultural conceptualisations, rather than at the level of the surface features of language. If a dialect may largely be characterised on the basis of its cultural conceptualisations, this carries profound theoretical implications. That is, there may be varieties of a language, either indigenous or not, that are distinct from each other at the level of cultural conceptualisations, rather than at the levels of phonology and syntax. This phenomenon calls for further exploration and a revisiting of the definition of 'dialect'.

5.6 Educational implications and concluding remarks

With respect to the populations studied, the results demonstrate that within an educational setting Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian participants operate on the basis of two distinct but overlapping conceptual systems. This pattern, however, was not transparent as it did not appear at the surface features of these students' speech. As mentioned earlier, this lack of transparency has usually led teachers to believe that Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian students attending metropolitan schools speak one and the same dialect. For instance, the investigator himself has been involved in a number of professional development sessions for Western

Australian educators, where the majority of teachers maintained that their Aboriginal students spoke Australian English and not Aboriginal English.

The ramification of this has been that teachers and educational systems tend to make certain assumptions about the linguistic repertoire of Aboriginal students at school. For example, Aboriginal students have been expected to perfectly understand the Standard Australian English spoken by their teachers and their classmates. Everything from the learning materials to the tests used at school widely reflects/tend to confirm this assumption (see Malcolm, Grote, Eggington, & Sharifian, 2002). This is not to put any blame on the educational system, as assumptions about the surface features of the speech of Aboriginal students are the primary contributors to this misperception. However, the results of this study point to the fact that for some Aboriginal students, dialectal differences do exist and these may largely operate at the level of cultural conceptualisations. As these conceptualisations do not lead to cognitive dissonance in Anglo-Australian interlocutors they become invisible.

In Australia, education is predominantly viewed as a process that begins with recognising and building on what the learners bring to the task of learning. This includes the linguistic and conceptual repertoire that students have developed during the early years of their life. Nevertheless, the current means of assessment, prevalent in educational settings, do not provide teachers with the kind of tools they need to help them become aware of these cultural conceptualisations they do not share. This means they cannot tap into the cultural conceptualisations that structure their students' sense of the world. The educational system needs to be aware of the cultural conceptualisations that are currently operative in the minds and speech of all students to be able to design and deliver appropriate teaching.

Greater teacher awareness of the cultural conceptualisations that Aboriginal students bring to the classroom would not only benefit teachers and Aboriginal students but also Anglo-Australian students. Since the data in this study reveal that there are certain responses from the Anglo-Australian students that can only be accounted for in terms of Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations. Non-Aboriginal educators may just as easily misinterpret non-Aboriginal children in such cases, unless they are aware of the Aboriginal conceptualisations.

The fact that, with respect to Aboriginal and 'mainstream' students, there are two conceptual systems operating in schools similar to the ones where the data for this study were collected augments the chance of miscommunication between educators and students and between students themselves. It is easy to imagine cases where the following sentences, which were produced by Aboriginal participants in this study, would be interpreted quite differently depending on whether the frame of cultural reference was to Aboriginal or Anglo-Australian conceptualisations:

You have a deadly family
That car is deadly

Interpreted with reference to Aboriginal conceptualisation, these utterances mean 'your family is great' and 'that car looks fantastic'. However, an Anglo-Australian who is not familiar with the Aboriginal conceptualisations is likely to interpret these utterances as 'your family is dangerous' and 'that car is scary/dangerous'. It is not hard to imagine the sort of consequences such misunderstandings might give rise to. Other examples of such potential misinterpretation would be where the following sentences from the data are interpreted with reference to Anglo-Australian conceptualisation:

Shame to go to school
Shame from the teacher
I get shame when I see anybody else

The use of the word 'shame' in the above utterances is likely to guide Anglo-Australians to assume that the speaker feels guilty as a result of some wrongdoing, and therefore the speaker is not inclined to either go to school or face others. This is, however, far from being the case. As has been noted, for Aboriginal speakers there are certain situations that give rise to some form of discomfort, due to factors such as respect, unfamiliarity, or being singled out. School is an environment where Aboriginal students experience various forms of unaccustomed spotlighting, from being different from the majority to being singled out for learning activities and of course punishment and praise.

Several responses analysed in this study indicate the fact that even some materials, for example, those picturing Aboriginal people as 'black people who lived in the bush and mainly in the past, who made their own weapons, etc.', that are used at school continue to create a 'shaming' situation for Aboriginal students. Furthermore, such images that are in a sense given authority by appearing in the educational materials in question may tend to reinforce negative attitudes, such as those expressed in responses such as '*scary*', '*dangerous*' to the word 'Aboriginal' by Anglo-Australian children.

On another level, there are other significant implications arising from the way Aboriginal students conceptualise experience which can affect their school performance. For example, the way Aboriginal students conceptualise 'home' may have serious ramifications for their formal schooling. There is anecdotal evidence showing that Aboriginal students may refer to their aunts' and uncles' houses as 'home' and when apparent discrepancies have been exposed this has sometimes been misjudged as 'lying' by school staff. It is also common among teachers to design classroom activities around the student's home experience. In doing so, teachers may assume, as a starting point, that their own cultural conceptualisations

are universally valid and form certain presuppositions from them concerning the student's own life experience. A teacher reported, for instance, an incident where she asked an Aboriginal student to describe his bed, to which the child replied "I don't have a bed Miss, I sleep on the couch". The data collected for this study have consistently shown that for Aboriginal children, Family is the centre of existence; everything and everyone is about Family and every experience ends in Family. This of course moves much beyond a simple matter of word meaning and superficial communication. In the Aboriginal conceptualisation, Family is the first priority and overrides everything and anything in terms of its significance. Family obligations and responsibilities are the centre of one's existence. As discussed earlier, in relation to several responses, Aboriginal students assume familial responsibilities, such as helping their siblings and their parents, early in their life. Familial obligations may sometimes interfere with the school schedule and thus an Aboriginal student may not attend school in order to stay home and help with certain familial issues.

It is best for the school system to be informed of cultural conceptualisations that students bring to school. Teachers and administrators need to be able to recognise the conceptualisations of their students and accommodate any implications these conceptualisations may have for school performance and attendance. Another ramification of the Aboriginal conceptualisation of Family for the school system relates to issues of guardianship and responsibility. For Aboriginal people the notion of guardianship often extends beyond that of immediate parents to include grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc. That is, one's extended family may often have an essential share in the guardianship of children and their upbringing. The notion of responsibility for Aboriginal people is reciprocal. Children and adults have mutual responsibilities towards each other and these responsibilities carry over to extended family members. Such a conceptualisation of guardianship and responsibility, however, is foreign to some school officials who regard the birth parents and only the birth parents as children's guardians. Anecdotal evidence reveals cases where schools have refused to cooperate with children's uncles and aunts who have claimed guardianship of the children, for example, and such clashes have often led to serious complications.

Overall, it can be seen that differences in the conceptualisation of experience can have serious implications for educational systems that attempt to respond to the needs of culturally diverse students. These implications relate to various levels of planning and implementation, as well as teacher education. It appears that additional measures are needed in order to review and reform policies and practices that are currently in place if all students are to find schools welcoming institutions. In this regard, it is hoped that this study has shed some light on the steps that might be taken to remedy the current state of affairs.

PART III

Intercultural communication

CHAPTER 6

Cultural conceptualisations in intercultural communication

A study of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians

Miscommunication between the speakers of Aboriginal English and Australian English has often disadvantaged Aboriginal speakers in a variety of settings ranging from classroom to the court (e.g. Christie & Harris, 1985; Eades, 1996, 2000; Malcolm, 1982; Sharifian, Rochecouste, & Malcolm, 2004). This miscommunication largely occurs due to the discrepancies in the way speakers of the two dialects conceptualise experience (Harkins, 1994; Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002). It is observed that even everyday words such as 'home' and 'family' may evoke contrasting cultural conceptualisations among Aboriginal and Anglo-Australians. As mentioned in Chapter 4, words such as 'sing' and 'smoke' may be used by Aboriginal people to refer to Aboriginal Spiritual experiences, which do not correspond to the experience of the majority of Anglo-Australians. This chapter presents an analysis of several instances of discourse by Aboriginal Australians which instantiate conceptualisations that are ensconced in the Aboriginal cultural beliefs and worldview. It is argued that unfamiliarity with such conceptualisations can lead to damaging miscommunication. The following sections present analyses of Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations as they are reflected in naturalistic discourse.

6.1 Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations

Aboriginal Australians have inhabited the continent for more than 50,000 years during which they have developed highly sophisticated conceptual systems. Aboriginal people belong to different social groups with distinctive cultural systems. It is, however, possible to discern, with a certain degree of idealisation, a common worldview underlying all the cultural differences among the Aboriginal groups (Charlesworth, Kimber, & Wallace, 1990). With regard to creation, as mentioned earlier in this book, Aboriginal worldview maintains that Creative Ancestors (also known as Ancestor Spirits) emerged from the earth and created everything

including the land, animals, plants, and the people, on their journeys during The Dreamtime ("The Dreamtime-2", 2000). The Ancestors completed their journeys and turned into features of the environments including animals, plants and even stones. "The Dreamtime continues as the "Dreaming" in the spiritual lives of Aboriginal people today" ("The Dreamtime-1", 2000: para 2).

Aboriginal people often experience some form of social injustice, clashing with Anglo-Australian culture, as they pursue their Spiritual beliefs. This observation extends to various settings in which Aboriginal people participate in the wider society. As an example, consider the following newspaper report of a court case of an Aboriginal person who paid a dear price for initiating an act that was founded in his spiritual beliefs:

Clashes between traditional Aboriginal beliefs and the Australian legal system were highlighted in the District Court last week. Carlton James Winmar, unemployed, of no fixed address, admitted setting fire to Porongurup bushland on February 22, last year, because he was afraid of a mystical creature called a pullyart. Winmar told the court he had been walking along Poronbgurup Road late at night with his de facto wife and their child after their car became bogged. He said that as they walked he heard noises like twigs snapping in the bushes. Winmar said he thought pullyarts had come to steal his child and so, to protect it, he set fire to scrub along the road for about a kilometre. He thought the fire would burn out but it took firefighters 16 hours to extinguish the blaze, which burnt four hectares of private land on which sheep were grazing. Judge Robert Keall said also pullyarts had supernatural powers and sometimes stole babies, but were afraid of light and fire. He accepted that Winmar's fears were genuine and that his actions arose from Aboriginal beliefs. Judge Keall also accepted that Winmar did not intend causing damage. But he said it was a serious offence because the lives of firefighters and other people were put at risk and property was damaged. Judge Keall said Winmar had shown concern to police about the damage caused but he would have been impressed if Winmar had apologised to the owners of the burnt property. He said Winmar's awareness of the dangers of lighting fires in the bush was overshadowed by his belief in pullyarts. Judge Keall said he respected Aboriginal law and culture but had to deal with Winmar according to established sentencing principles. He sentences Winmar to two years probation and ordered him to do 200 hours of community service work. Winmar had faced a maximum penalty of 14 years' jail. (The West Australian, 20th August, 1990)

The above newspaper excerpt is self-evident in showing how a spiritual belief may disadvantage an Aboriginal person, particularly in a 'modern' society where the considerations of 'private property' and 'public liability' are expected to override traditional cultural beliefs. Today, the Australian legal system has no room for the tolerance of alternative worldviews and belief systems. Arthur (1996:40) notes

that “[non-Aboriginal law in Australia] does not, nor does it seek to recognise, the spiritual dimensions of society and life”.

Another example where a lack of understanding of Aboriginal cultural beliefs has led to a clumsy and alienating act on the part of a non-Aboriginal teacher comes from an anecdote by an Aboriginal Islander Education Officer (AIEO):

- K: Um we had- last year we had a student um said that they saw red eyes, about three or four Aboriginal students and um the teacher took em to the nurse and he came and sort of looked for me and let me know that the kids saw red eyes.
- F: Did the teacher think the kids were mental or something?
- K: I dunno but I sat and explained to him that we do have that, kids will see red eyes. We had um a girl from [name of a region] here, ah I said to him that maybe cuz she was one of the students, maybe it's time to go back and they already here looking for her and that's all – not here to harm her or anything, just looking out for her and it's time for her to go home cuz she was goin to school here.

It can be seen that in the above case a number of Aboriginal students were referred to the school's health specialist for sharing their Spiritual experience of seeing 'red eyes' with the teacher. 'Red eyes' refers to Beings in the Aboriginal worldview that are variably known as 'little fallas', 'balyits' [wrongly spelt as "pulyart" in the newspaper section presented earlier], 'wudachis', 'mamaries', etc. by different groups of Aboriginal people. The characteristics of these Beings may of course differ according to various accounts given by Aboriginal people from different language groups. In other words, different groups of Aboriginal people may hold different categories and schemas about Beings such as *wudachis* and *balyits*. In the above excerpt, for example, the schema associated with 'red eyes' characterises their presence with a sign for those who perceive them. This aspect of the schema is elaborated on by the AIEO quoted above as follows:

Yeah people just come down or there's always a sign for the people and even if they just lookin for the thirteen fourteen year olds that gotta go back for the law and they get put through that. So they just come down and look for 'em.

It can be seen that the presence of 'red eyes' may signal that it is time for a person to go back to their Country to go through the Law. The word 'Law' here evokes a schema that is distinctively Aboriginal. The Aboriginal conceptualisations of Law, deeply rooted in the Aboriginal worldview, include bodies of knowledge about the social order in Aboriginal societies. These conceptualisations may be instantiated in certain rituals during Law related ceremonies. During the Law Meetings, girls and boys may go through initiation into adulthood, which is known as 'man/

woman making' (Arthur, 1996). Overall, it is evident that the above-quoted incident involved conceptualisations that are culture specific and that a lack of understanding of the underlying Aboriginal conceptualisations led the non-Aboriginal teacher to take an irrelevant measure. Of course the teacher might well have acted on the basis of the Anglo-Australian schema that associates 'strange' things with some form of hallucination.

In the following section, several excerpts produced by Aboriginal Australians are presented in which the discourse does not make explicit the conceptualisations that it is entrenched in. This phenomenon, it is argued, increases the chance of miscommunication, as it does not make salient the specifically Aboriginal Australian standpoint. Instead it evokes contrasting but familiar conceptualisations in Anglo-Australian interlocutors. It is shown that an index to Aboriginal culture-specific conceptualisations may be achieved through everyday words of English such as 'sing' and 'smoke'.

A reminder seems to be in order here about the use of the word 'spirituality' to refer to Aboriginal cultural experiences. My use of the terms here is to somehow facilitate non-Aboriginal people's understanding of the experiences that draw on the Aboriginal worldview. Some Aboriginal people find the distinction between spiritual and real invalid and strongly argue that their experience is real (e.g. Glenys Collard, personal communication). Aboriginal people may, however, use the term 'spirit', when talking about Beings in their worldview, as a communicative strategy to make themselves understood as much as possible to non-Aboriginal people. It is to be noted that although using the word 'spirit' might help an interlocutor get a rough idea of what has happened in a certain event, a genuine understanding of the event and the emotions that are associated with it would require being equipped with the conceptualisations which are rooted in the particular view of the world. There are also many cases where Aboriginal speakers refer to the Beings without suggesting that they are 'spirits'. Consider the following narrative by an Aboriginal adult talking to three Aboriginal people and a non-Aboriginal researcher:

Y97 Tormenting Story

FT: That what happened to me once, I was out bush, I went to this hill, and this ole fella said 'Oh don't go near that 'ill', but me nah, I went up the 'ill, when I was mustering sheep, and I went in lookin in aroun, an these little fallas lived, an that night they come out an tormented me, got me an' chucked me outa my bed, chucked the bed on me an all I had to go back to that 'ill because I took somethin from the hill what I shouldna taken an I took it back

EH: Put it back

FT: An those little (xx) didn't come no more

- JR: So they knew
 FT: Oh yeah, I took a little a grinding rock, I'll take it back, I-I'll take that thing back, but they jumped all over me, chucked me outa my bed didn't 'e, this was out in [name of a place]. (Aboriginal English Database, 2000)

It can be seen that the narrator has referred to 'little fellas' punishing him for taking a grinding rock from a hill. This text was shown to a non-Aboriginal teacher for interpretation and she made sense of little fellas as 'little boys'. She could not figure out why the 'little boys' have punished the narrator for taking a grinding rock from the hill. As mentioned above, the phrase 'little fellas' in fact refers to Beings that are part of the Aboriginal worldview. The schemas that Aboriginal people have for these Beings attribute certain functions to them, among which looking after the environment and punishing those who do harm to it, as in this example by taking away a piece of stone. It is evident that one could easily misinterpret the above narrative if the cultural conceptualisations that underlie it were unfamiliar. The following excerpt is another example of discourse clothing Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations:

- B: They told me my Auntie is sick, I wen' an' gave a pump to 'er heart, she was alright then.
 F: Where does she live?
 B: She lives up north.
 F: It must have been a long trip.
 B: (Puzzled) What trip?!!

In the above exchange the Aboriginal speaker is giving an account of his experience of healing his aunt who was suffering from a heart condition. The non-Aboriginal person (the author) then makes a remark about the distance that the Aboriginal person must have travelled to get to the place where his aunt lives. The miscommunication here is caused by this author's unfamiliarity with the conceptualisations that were being instantiated by the Aboriginal person. The Aboriginal speaker was in fact relating his own Spiritual experience of healing his aunt, which did not involve any physical movement from where he was located. The speaker is categorised by Aboriginal people as 'clever' or a 'cleverman'. 'Clever people' in this sense are those who have special Spiritual powers such as healing at a distance. Arthur makes the following remarks about the powers associated with the category of 'clever' in Aboriginal English:

The powers referred to encompass those of healing, sorcery (including the power over life and death), being able to communicate with non-human living things, being able to fly from one place to another while in a spiritual state, and interacting with the physical world (especially regarding rainmaking). (Arthur, 1996: 21)

It can be noticed that there are subcategories within the general category of 'clever' in Aboriginal Australia. Arthur (1996) notes that some 'clever people' only have one kind of power, such as healing. A subcategory of 'clever' also includes animals that possess Spiritual powers. The following sentence instantiates conceptualisations that are close associates of the category of 'clever'.

A: She got worried cuz she found a feather on 'er dashboard?

(Quoted by Terry Kessar, personal communication)

The category that is instantiated in the above sentence is referred to as 'feather foot'. A 'feather foot' is a Being with 'clever powers', who often carries out revenge missions (Arthur, 1996). The name 'feather foot' refers to the shoes, made of feathers these Beings use to disguise their tracks. The 'feather foot' schema associates finding a feather by an Aboriginal person with a warning of coming revenge and that is why the person who found the feather on her dashboard felt worried. The sentence was shown to an Aboriginal person who said he got a shiver down in his spine when he read it. Such cases reveal how the words of a language can instantiate conceptualisations that are deeply rooted in people's worldview, and how these largely drive their emotions and feelings. This observation is further reflected in the following excerpt:

S: (worried) Auntie can you smell the rose?

C: Don't worry bub they just 'avin a look.

The above exchange instantiates an Aboriginal schema according to which people who have died may pay a visit to their family or to places where they once lived. The first speaker in this particular instance has smelled the rose powder that her mother used to wear when she was alive and has taken this as a signal that her mother has come back for a reason. The other Aboriginal speaker tries to comfort her by saying that her mother, and possibly some others, have just come around to 'have a look'. It is clear that without being familiar with the requisite cultural conceptualisations it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend such an exchange. The following excerpt from a Yarn by the second speaker in the above exchange further instantiates the schemas of a visit from the dead:

Cuz when we was about 10 an we went back to [name of a place] to the old camps, my mum an dad stole us an we wen home any way, and my old Nan 'ad old tin shack, a little tin shack and two beds was in there, not no mattresses, just lot o clothes an bags was the mattress. Umm, I never knew my pop um only know 'im I know about 'im, an things like that but I never seen 'im I can't remember seeing 'im, but he was, when we was at used to go and camp there at my nan's an it'd be dark and you only 'ad a little bit of candle burning, umm and she said, "lay down Nan, 'ave a sleep you kids, lay down" an you'd be layin down, three of us would be

laying in one little bed with 'er, and so "ah Nan, whas dat noise, whas dat noise, Nan?" because you 'ear that creak, creak out of that old bed, and she said, "Nuh, don't worry about that, thas only grandfather, thas 'im, kicking in 'is bed and layin down, thas all don't worry".

It can be seen that the speaker's mother has associated the creaking of the bed with the presence of her grandfather. It is to be noted here that in the above cases, the surface features of discourse do not make the underlying conceptualisations explicit for a non-Aboriginal audience and this can increase the chance of misunderstanding the content of the message being presented. The implicit representation of conceptualisations in discourse observed in the above cases is largely due to the assumption that such conceptualisations are known by the members of the cultural group or at least by the interlocutors participating in the current conversation. One reason for being implicit about certain conceptualisations is that they are part of the 'sacred' knowledge of Aboriginal people and should not be made public in discourse. As Glenys Collard (personal communication) puts it, "They're things sort of, don't talk about too much, but it's known, it is known". Charlesworth, Kimber and Wallace (1990: 3) also observe that "the secrecy that is a pervasive feature of Aboriginal life severely limits Aboriginal informants from speaking openly of sacred matters even to sympathetic white people".

Returning to the discussion of the Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations associated with the return of the deceased people, it should be noted that according to these schemas people who have died will maintain bonds with their Mob (extended family) in various forms and for various reasons and their return may not be confined to mere presence. This element of the schema is instantiated in the following excerpt:

C: That when.. my mum was real crook and she..., she said, "I woke up an it was still in my mouth.. the taste of all the medicine cause they come an give me some medicine last night an she always tells us that you can't move.. an you wanna sing out an say just.. sorta try an' relax that happened to me lotta times I was about twelve.

In the above recount the speaker remembers that once her mother was ill and that she told them the next morning that 'they' went to her and gave her some 'medicine' that she could still taste. Without having the requisite schema, the audience of the above recount would be likely to think that 'they' refers to some medical professionals who visited the mum after hours and gave her some syrup or tablet. However, further discussion with the narrator made it apparent that the incident being narrated here captures a Spiritual experience in which the speaker's ancestors visited her mother to treat her illness using the powers they have. It is evident here again that Aboriginal speakers may instantiate their cultural

conceptualisations through English words, such as 'medicine', which are unlikely to evoke similar schemas for non-Aboriginal people.

The following excerpt is another instantiation of the schema of the Spiritual presence of the dead. The schema in this case is associated with a place where many Aboriginal children who were taken away from their families, known as 'stolen generations', were kept. Today, a section of this place is used as an educational aid unit for Aboriginal children:

- A: The teacher could 'ear someone screamin loud in the bathroom, it wasn't one of our kids, in green and yellow shirt, 'e ran out.

The speaker of the above excerpt had made sense of the above incident in terms of the schema that the Spirits of the children who went through a lot of hurt and pain in the place still dwell in there. She believed that the unfamiliar student must have been a Spirit of a child residing in the place. The following anecdote also instantiates the schema that is associated with this place:

- A: You know Nancy?
F: Yeah, the non-Aboriginal teacher.
A: Yeah, they chased 'er out of school. She never aksed if she could type them words, then she said, "Oh my hair is standing at the back of my neck. Oh I feel cold. I've gotto go. There was someone standing next to 'er. I told 'er you shouldn't be typin them words cause them fallas still live 'ere. There was a lot of hurt and pain 'ere.

In the above exchange, the speaker maintains that the Spirits of the stolen children tried to force the non-Aboriginal teacher out of the room because she was typing some Aboriginal words on the computer. It can be seen that the reference to the Spirits of the children is made through the pronoun 'they' and the phrase 'them fallas'. It is obvious here that a thorough understanding of the incident, including its emotional complexities, is impossible without the conceptualisations that are being instantiated in the narrative.

Another English word that often evokes culture-specific conceptualisations in Aboriginal people is 'smoke'. The following excerpt shows how this word is used to instantiate an Aboriginal schema:

- C: When we moved to [name of a place] we 'ad to smoke the 'ouse cause this Nungar woman lived there.
F: Why smoking the house?
C: it's to keep the sickness and the evil and all those sorts of things an it can be torment tormented tormented not just sickness but there's sickness tormented there's a whole lot of things you can put on it um bad things go into the liddle kids that gotta live in there um and you had to go.. gotta.. he had to go an

smoke it. we had- wanted to smoke it an.. so we just um.. right from the front door we ad to.. I had to git what we had like the trees and she used um candles um lotta candles she bought an liddle saucers. but I just had to bring the um tin.. tin an the leaves keep puttin the leaves in to smoke and we walked through to every- from the doorway to the- to- to coming in to the front door.

It can be seen that the Aboriginal speaker makes an attempt to explicate the schema that is associated with 'Smoking the house' for the non-Aboriginal interlocutor [the present author]. According to this schema, the Spirits of the people living in a place may reside there after their demise and therefore when people move to new places they need to Smoke those places to force the Spirits out of the place. The schema maintains that a failure to do so may lead to harm to children caused by some 'bad' Spirits.

It is clear that in the above recount the speaker has experienced difficulty in capturing the Spiritual schema using such words as 'sickness' and 'torment'. It is not infrequent to hear comments from Aboriginal speakers about how they may find words of English inadequate in expressing their Spiritual experience. This is of course usually the case when the addressee in a conversation is a non-Aboriginal person. Aboriginal people, however, have managed over a long period of time to somehow agree among themselves on which conceptualisations to instantiate through which words. Another Aboriginal schema associated with the word 'smoke' is instantiated in the following excerpt by the above quoted Aboriginal speaker:

- C: That's when I wen up to up [name of a region], that was years ago, old fallas, there's couple of old girls an couple of old blokes was there but the old girl said, "we gotta go an smoke that that one there" an I said, "me?" and they said, "yeah, you get smoked" an I said, "no no, nex time I come back, bu the next time I went back I already knew then that was my Dad's family, they must already knew but I didn't an they wanted to smoke me to protect me from the other umm mobs that ways, they knew who I was but I didn't know.

It can be seen that Smoking in this instance is carried out to mark the speaker as an insider and protect her against other groups of Aboriginal people whose country the speaker was visiting. Smoking in this case would involve rubbing special burnt leaf on the body of the person. Arthur (1996) notes that Smoking may be used for 'cleansing' purposes by some Aboriginal people. In such cases, a person may be required to walk through the smoke of a fire. Arthur notes that "[t]hese practices are most often carried out after a death, to dissuade the spirit of the recently dead from disturbing the living" (Arthur, 1996: 57).

At this stage it seems possible to make observations concerning the relationship between body and soul as they characterise the life and death of an Aboriginal

person. It seems, at least to the author, that in the Aboriginal worldview the soul can separate temporarily from the body for different reasons while the person is still alive. As mentioned above, the Spirit of the 'clever people' can leave their body to travel through space and then return to be united with the body again. This however does not seem to be confined only to 'clever people'. Consider the following excerpt from an Aboriginal person talking to the present author:

- A: When I went to [name of a state], they said to me, "Oh, I seen you before", I reckon their spirits must've come to seen me, or my spirit travelled before me.

The above Aboriginal speaker did not categorise herself as 'clever', nor did she suggest that the people she met were 'clever' but still she is talking about people's spirit being able to travel. Another form of separation of body and soul is through one's Spirit being united with an animal's body, or turning one's body into the body of an animal. This schema is instantiated in the following excerpt by an Aboriginal speaker:

- C: It's hard cause sometimes you could say, "ah, look! that mob of emus going that way", but the next, down the town you see a mob of blackfallas walking.

In this excerpt the speaker suggests that in certain cases what appears to be a group of animals such as emus could in fact be a number of Aboriginal people. She later added that these people may be on their way to a mission like 'checking on their people'. It is obvious that a genuine understanding of the above excerpt would require familiarity with the cultural conceptualisations that are being instantiated by the speaker. The present author noted that when asking for clarification the speaker in many cases used phrases and words which themselves captured culture-specific conceptualisations. For instance, the phrase 'checking on their people' is likely to evoke differential interpretations in people from different cultures. In practice, this makes the task of identifying the underlying conceptualisations a multi-layered inquiry in which clarifications quite often require further elaboration and explanation.

As mentioned earlier in the book, one of the English words that Aboriginal people have adopted to express their Spiritual cultural conceptualisations is the word 'sing'. According to Arthur (1996:57), the verb 'sing' is used by Aboriginal English speakers to refer to making "a ritual incantation, sometimes over an object or a person, usually for malevolent intent, but also for reasons of 'love magic'". The conceptualisations associated with the word 'sing' are partly instantiated in the following sentence by an Aboriginal speaker:

- A: My sister said, "when you go to that country, you not allowed to let 'em take your photo, they can sing you".

According to the schema of Singing, a man may fall in love with a girl and as a result would try to obtain her hair, photo, or something in order to 'sing' her. This would make the girl turn to the person who had sung and refusal to do so may bring the sung girl serious or even fatal illness (Luella Eggington, personal communication). This schema is further instantiated in the following recount by an Aboriginal person:

- K: Cuz I had one guy – we were looking in a video shop one day and he just sort of followed me around and I couldn't speak his language, he was talking in his own language, kept following me everywhere and the only thing I understood was he wanted to ring up but he didn't have the money to ring cuz he thought you just press and ring through but you had to pay 40 cents and he was talking – and I didn't want him to touch my hair and I kept walking away from him
- F: And you thought he was gonna sexually assault you?
- K: It wasn't because I think that there wasn't anything sexual it was just if he touched me I would – I just felt scared of him touching me, if he wanted to touch my hair that he'd sing me and wanted, you know, make me sick or sort of follow him without me realising going with him sort of thing that way and he wasn't Wongi, he wasn't Nyungar, he was probably Yamatji or something else but it just frightened me cuz I didn't understand his language at all. I don't speak the language.

It is evident in the above exchange that the non-Aboriginal speaker (the author) is drawing on a schema that associates 'touching the hair' with an intention to incur sexual assault, while the narrative is in fact instantiating a schema that relates to the ritual of exerting some form of Spiritual power onto the physical world by an Aboriginal person (Arthur, 1996). In this excerpt the Aboriginal speaker alludes to finding someone's hair and touching someone's hair with Singing. The schema is further explicated in by the speaker as follows:

- K: you know, they'll pick your hair up and stuff like that and you know he kept sort of coming near me and I wouldn't let him touch my hair and (xx) because we can get sick without knowing.

The speaker also stated that when a person gets sick as a result of someone's singing, the Western Doctors would not be able to help.

Apart from the use of English words such as 'sing' and 'smoke', Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations may be instantiated in discourse through associating certain events in nature with underlying Spiritual causes. Aboriginal speakers may talk about encounters with phenomena, such as a bird, in terms of 'signs' or 'warnings'. The following excerpt exemplifies this observation:

- C: When I was livin with Kate, there was this bird comin for three days, I said, “Kate I don’t like this bastard”, and thas when Jane’s sister died, real quick.

It can be seen that the speaker in this case has associated the appearance of a bird with a signal about the death of a relative of hers. It is to be noted that the associations discussed here may not be made explicit by Aboriginal speakers, again due to an assumption that these conceptualisations are more or less known by their interlocutors. The following excerpt provides another example of such discourse:

- C: when my Dad ‘ad a dunno what he had something like stroke, but ‘e went right out to it, he was unconscious, he was real sick, but the same time my girl was coming home on the [a name] route and the tree cracked, must’ve been the same time as the one where my Dad where he was 200 kilometres other way, near home, she was coming from Perth going home an the tree cracked in front of her and just split an fell down right on the side of their car and the motor car, that one smashed, last thing my Dad remember before ‘e went right to it, he got real sick, cause he was right on the border of country, of the country, of the land.

This excerpt instantiates conceptualisations that associate breaking of a tree or a limb with a warning or a sign. The speaker here is maintaining that once her father was driving on the border of another group’s country and a tree shattered into pieces in front his car as a warning, causing him a heart condition. She notes that her daughter at the same time had a similar experience which she took as a sign informing her of what had happened to her father. It is clear that ‘sign’ and ‘warning’ here present categorises that include culture-specific instances and associations. Another example of the discourse instantiating the category of Sign:

- C: that, that rain, the rain ‘ere, the angry rain, das when some, you done somethin or someone’s done somethin, that did bad an it’s like it’s not rainin and it comes and it’s like bangin, loud, sort of lashin, makes the trees go shshsht, you know, hittin out that sort of rain an it can come out like that but then you find out after someone doin somethin, and you go thas what it was,

Here the speaker is giving a description of one kind of rain categorised as Angry rain. She further elaborates on the schema that is associated with this kind of rain: it is a sign that someone has done something ‘forbidden’. It is clear that although the speaker’s elaboration partly makes explicit the conceptualisations that are associated with Angry rain, there are still layers that remain hidden for an unfamiliar audience. The clause ‘someone’s done something’, for example, is unlikely to evoke the intended conceptualisations in the mind of a person who is not familiar with the worldview being instantiated here. The speaker further elaborated on the clause as follows:

- C: someone, if it's not me, someone done something shouldna, something, something, could be went out somewhere where they should've not went, might have went out to [name of a place] might've went to [name of a place], and coming back an then next minute it's starts raining but it's a wind an it's got the wind with it, that's Warra rain that is, tha's Warra baad rain you know, that's bad thing, someone savage stirred up them all them fallas now,

It can be seen that although further elaboration by the speaker has shed some light on the conceptualisations underlying the clause 'someone's done something', a thorough understanding of the discourse would require understanding why going to a place should stir up the 'fallas' and also an understanding of who these 'fallas' are. Often, non-Aboriginal audiences make sense of Aboriginal Spiritual experience in terms of their own worldview. That is, they make sense of the creators of the Angry rain in terms of God and they even call Aboriginal worldview a 'religion'. The following excerpt instantiates another category of 'rain' in Aboriginal worldview.

- C: same like when it's death or funeral times when it's burial, might not, might be good, and then this could comes and it's the rain it's called the midjal, it rain, it's a sad rain, it's crying rain, ... the old fallas crying for umm not crying for the falla who's gone cause they're with them, they're crying for the fallas that're there, they're cryin sad for watchin all the people mob cryin, you know, and it's a soft rain, a different rain,

It can be seen that the speaker ascribes the act of Crying to 'the old fallas', a category which, in its Spiritual reference, includes the Spirits of the Ancestors. This excerpt is a clear example of discourse reflecting cultural conceptualisations, that is, cultural categories and schemas. The speaker here describes the category of Crying Rain by saying 'it's a soft rain' and partly explicates the schema that is associated with this category in the rest of the excerpt.

From a syntactic perspective, two noteworthy points emerge out of the analysis presented so far in this section. First, a wide range of linguistic units may serve the purpose of indexing cultural conceptualisations in discourse. That is, cultural conceptualisations may be signalled by and to the Aboriginal interlocutor in a noun, verb, verb phrase, noun phrase, etc. (See Table 3 below).

Second, it is observed that in certain cases Aboriginal conceptualisations have been grammaticalised in English in ways which modify basic grammatical functions. For instance, in Australian English the verb 'sing', in its transitive form, usually takes an inanimate object such as 'song'. However, as it was noted earlier, an Aboriginal person may use an animate object following the verb 'sing' (i.e. *Sing me*). Similarly, the verb 'smoke' in Australian English takes an inanimate object whereas in Aboriginal English it can take an animate object (i.e. *Smoke me*) to instantiate an Aboriginal conceptualisation of experience.

Table 3. Examples of the grammatical categories used as indices to cultural conceptualisations

	Construction	Example
General syntactic category	Pronoun	They
	Demon. + N	This bird
	N	Medicine
	Adj. + N	Little Fellas,
	N + N	Feather Foot
	Indef. Quant. + of + N	Mob of Emus
	Prep. + Art. + N	For the Law
	Indefin. Pron.	Something
	PPA + N	Crying Rain
	V + O	To Sing sb To Smoke sb

6.2 Concluding remarks

Overall, this chapter shows the value of studying intercultural communication from the perspective of cultural conceptualisations. The careful analysis of the discourse produced by these Aboriginal English speakers reveals how language embodies cultural schemas and categories that characterise the cultural cognition of a particular speech community. Language acts as a carrier and repository for these cultural conceptualisations. Thus, the cultural grounding of language can facilitate communication between those who share certain cultural conceptualisations while it can complicate or even impede fluid communication between those who do not.

The examples presented in this chapter demonstrate how the use of English words and phrases by Aboriginal Australians may instantiate schemas and categories that are rooted in Aboriginal people’s view of the world, including its strong Spiritual basis/component. It is maintained that a lack of understanding, or acknowledgment, of the Spiritual basis of Aboriginal people’s discourse may increase the chance of miscommunication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal speakers with a potentially damaging impact on Aboriginal people’s lives. Spirituality extends to every aspect of many Aboriginal people’s life. As Glenys Collard puts it, “Them things happen all the time”. It is clear from the analyses presented in this chapter that an approach informed by the awareness of the role of cultural conceptualisations in discourse afford useful analytical tools, such as schemas and categories, for delving into the nature of cultural understandings that are entrenched in language.

Cultural conceptualisations in English as an International Language (EIL)

In this chapter I make an attempt to explore the concept of ‘English as an International language’ using the framework of *cultural conceptualisations*. The chapter explores how EIL may be viewed from a cultural-conceptual perspective when speakers draw on various systems of conceptualisations in EIL speech situations. This is followed by a discussion of the need for a revised model of communication in EIL contexts. Some preliminary principles and strategies are discussed in this section. Notions such as ‘language proficiency’ and ‘variety’ are then revisited in the light of this discussion.

As noted in Chapter 1, I use the term *cultural conceptualisations* to refer to units of conceptual knowledge such as *schemas* (e.g. Bartlett, 1932; D’Andrade, 1995; Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002; Rumelhart, 1980; Strauss & Quinn, 1997), *categories* (e.g. Lakoff, 1987; Rosch & Lloyd, 1978), and *conceptual metaphors* (e.g. Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) that emerge from the interactions between the members of a cultural group. A schema largely reflects a thematic relationship between the concepts that comprise it, while categories are developed on the basis of class membership. However, schemas and categories are related to each other in so far as the concepts that are part of a schema may themselves be categorical. For example, the ‘restaurant’ schema contains the concept of ‘food’, itself a category, which includes ‘sandwich’, ‘pasta’, and so on, as its instances. Conceptual metaphors are basically formed by mapping from a category, schema or image schema onto another schema (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). For example, in American English marriage can be conceptualised as a ‘journey’, reflected in expressions such as *We have reached a crossroads in our relationship* (Quinn, 1996). In African English, ‘political leadership’ is often conceptualised in terms of ‘eating’ (e.g. *They have given him plenty to eat*, which is used in Cameroon when a new government official is appointed) (Polzenhagen & Wolf, 2007).

Against this background, I now turn to a discussion of how EIL may be described in terms of the notion of *cultural conceptualisations*.

7.1 EIL as a language of various cultural conceptualisations

I make sense of English as an International language in terms of a language which can be used to communicate various systems of cultural conceptualisations. Consider the following examples from Aboriginal English and from Australian English.

Aboriginal English: This land is me.

Australian English: This land is mine.

The two English sentences above encode two different systems of conceptualisations with regard to the relationship between an individual and the land. The Aboriginal English sentence draws on a schema according to which people and the land are linked in various ways, such as by totemic connection. One system of conceptualisation may appear patently ridiculous from the point of view of another. An Aboriginal person made the remark that the land was there before he was born, so how could *he* own the land? Often, in response to 'this land is mine', Aboriginal people respond, 'but the land owns us'. From the perspective of Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations, people and the land have reciprocal responsibilities towards each other. For example, the land provides food for people and people are supposed to 'look after' the land. The Australian English sentence, on the other hand, encodes the Anglo conceptualisations of the relationship between the individual and the land, in which an individual's possession of a piece of land involves being able to transfer that possession to other individuals, usually for money. From a different perspective, the Australian sentence may also suggest political possession, that is, 'This land is mine because I am Australian' (Ian Malcolm, personal communication). This example clearly shows how different cultural conceptualisations are encoded in two varieties of English.

Aboriginal English speakers often use English words to communicate their own cultural conceptualisations that have evolved throughout the history of their existence. Even everyday words such as 'family', 'home' and 'shame' often evoke conceptualisations in Aboriginal English speakers that are different from those of Anglo-Australians. For example, in some varieties of Aboriginal English the word 'mum' is associated with a category that encompasses aunts, grandmother, and so forth. The word 'home' for many Aboriginal people may mainly be associated with the company of their extended family rather than being confined to a building (refer to Chapter 5). It should also be noted here that as a result of contact, certain new and overlapping systems of conceptualisations have also developed (Malcolm & Sharifian, 2005).

Similarly, bilingual learners and speakers of English may draw on their first language systems of cultural conceptualisations when using English. For example,

a Persian speaker of English may draw on the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* 'modesty' in responding to compliments (discussed in more detail in Chapter 9). Consider the following example.

Lecturer: I heard you've won a prestigious award. Congratulations! This is fantastic.

Student: Thanks so much. I haven't done anything. It's the result of your effort and your knowledge. I owe it all to you.

Lecturer: Oh, no!!! Don't be ridiculous. It's all your work. (Personal data)

In the above conversation between an Iranian student and an Australian lecturer, the student's reply to the lecturer's congratulations appears to have discomfited the lecturer, leaving him with the feeling that his contribution to the student's success has been overestimated. The lecturer commented that the student 'has stretched the truth too far'. The student on the other hand maintained that she did not find anything wrong with her remark.

Here, the Iranian speaker appears to have responded to the compliment in a way that is appropriate to the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* while the Australian lecturer's response seems to be in consonance with the Anglo-Australian schema of 'individual merit'.

The point is already obvious. Unfamiliarity with the systems of conceptualisations on which the international speakers of English are relying may lead to various forms and degrees of discomfort and even miscommunication.

Different solutions have been presented to this situation, among which is a proposal for a 'nuclear' English (e.g. Quirk, 1981). If, however, we take the idea of systems of cultural conceptualisations emerging from the interactions between people seriously, then it is obvious that even if we could come up with a 'nuclear' English, this itself would in time develop its own new systems of conceptualisations. I am not sure what the nuclear English developed out of interactions between Japanese and Malays would have in common with one which would develop out of the interactions between Chinese and Anglo-Australian speakers.

The alternative I am proposing requires the acceptance and appreciation of the idea that English can be associated with a wide array of cultural conceptualisations drawn from various cultural groups. It also emphasises the importance of exploring the implications of this idea for a revised model of communication.

7.2 The need for a revised model of communication

As mentioned above, instead of trying to explore how English as an International Language could be turned into a 'nuclear' language or trying to turn the whole

world into a 'homogenous' speech community, it might be more helpful to offer a revised model of communication. The one that I have in mind would have at its core the following principle: the need to recognise that in international contexts two interlocutors may not share the same system of cultural conceptualisations even though they both use English to engage in communication with each other. In routine interactions, speakers rely on the tacit assumption that their cultural conceptualisations are shared by their interlocutors. This may achieve for them a certain degree of communicative efficiency. Speakers of different languages and varieties may of course do this to different degrees. Aboriginal English speakers often rely to a relatively large extent on the assumption of shared conceptualisations. Consider the following example:

No big boy A ... reckon
 he help K ...
 was drivin back from Wiluna or whatever some place
 an light behind,
 look in revision mirror
 no he's gone,
 drivin along
 saw i,
 look in the 'vision mirror again,
 look in the back seat,
 an ole ole blackfella sittin in the back seat, lookin at im
 (Aboriginal English Database, 2000)

Here the speaker makes a reference to a 'light behind'. This 'light' is known as the *minmin light* and is variously associated with spiritual presence for different Aboriginal cultural groups. One version is that the 'light' is a spiritual presence that can mislead people and therefore people should flip down their rear vision mirror (which in Aboriginal English may be referred to as 'revision mirror'). The 'ole blackfella' is another spiritual reference which is associated with the presence of *minmin light* (Glenys Collard, personal communication). It should be obvious that interpreting this text the way in which it is interpreted by the speakers would require knowledge of particular Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations.

In contexts such as the production of the above text, often speakers build on the assumption that their cultural conceptualisations are shared by their hearers. In the revised model of communication for English as an International Language, interlocutors would first need to carefully examine the assumption of shared cultural conceptualisations. That is, participants in EIL communicative events would need to constantly remind themselves that 'other interlocutors may not share the same schema, category or metaphor that I am drawing on as a frame of reference

in my production and comprehension.' This may result in adopting several strategies such as the one highlighted below.

Consider the following conversation between two people from different cultural backgrounds:

- A: You stupid!
- B: Can I ask in what contexts you usually use this expression in your culture?
- A: Hmm, we can use it as a term of endearment between husband and wife, like the wife saying this to husband to say, 'you're not kind to yourself'.
- B: (Surprise and smile) Ah, right! So I should take it as a compliment.

As it can be seen, here the hearer has asked for clarification of how the concept of 'stupid' may be used in the speaker's culture. To the extent that this strategy can be used without interrupting the flow of conversation too much, it may prove to be effective in avoiding misunderstandings caused by the interference of different systems of cultural conceptualisations.

Another example of the use of this strategy follows:

- A: As a friend I expected more from you!
- B: Can I ask you to tell more about the way you perceive friendship in your culture?
- A: (explains the concept of 'friendship' in her culture for about 15 minutes)
- B: It is quite clear that in my culture, we have a different understanding of 'friendship' ...

The above two excerpts clearly show that even a notion such as 'friendship', which may be thought to be universal, can be associated with widely different cultural conceptualisations and hence expectations depending on the culture in question. The notion of 'friendship' appears to be a category with specific culturally defined boundaries about who we consider as our 'friend'. This is, of course, in addition to the conceptualisations that each individual may associate with such words based on their own life experiences and expectations.

It is acknowledged here that asking for clarification may not always work for a variety of reasons. For example, with some cultures, direct interrogation may prove to be inappropriate. The Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations of 'communication' do not allow for much direct interrogation (Eades, 1996; Walsh, 1994). In such contexts, cultural conceptualisations may unfold themselves gradually as the conversation continues for a while.

Moreover, we need to revise our understanding of some traditional models of communication in order to operate effectively in EIL communicative events. Even the notions of 'sender' and 'receiver' prove to be less clear-cut in EIL contexts. As the above examples suggest, both parties in a communicative event may need to

actively and equally collaborate with each other in order to clarify the cultural conceptualisations that serve as starting points for them. As has been mentioned above, when encoding our 'messages', it is easy to overestimate what we share with others particularly if they come from different cultural or sub-cultural backgrounds. Within the revised model of communication laid out in this chapter, I argue that there is a need for the interlocutors participating in a communicative setting to constantly monitor the assumptions they are making about the systems of conceptualisations on which the other interlocutors are drawing.

Similarly, using the famous credo 'think globally, act locally', interlocutors in an EIL communicative event may benefit from thinking 'globally', so to speak, by keeping in mind that English is now used globally to express various systems of cultural conceptualisations, and at the same time acting and collaborating 'locally' with their conversants to explicate conceptualisations that more directly inform and contextualise the here-and-now communicative event. I now turn to a discussion of the implications of the notion of EIL for some fundamental concepts in ELT.

7.3 EIL and the notions of 'Language Proficiency', 'Native Speaker' and 'Teaching Model'

One of the basic notions discussed in the context of EIL is the 'native speaker' as has been discussed in the relevant literature on this topic (e.g. Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Braine, 1999; McKay, 2000, 2002; Medgyes, 1992, 1994). It would be obvious from the discussions that are presented here and also those by McKay and others on the notion of EIL that 'native' speaker competence may not necessarily enable individuals to be effective speakers in EIL contexts, particularly if their competence has been exclusively developed in monocultural contexts.

The notion of 'language proficiency', however, may need further discussion, as the notion of 'being proficient' in EIL appears to require more than just the mastery of grammar and lexicon in EIL contexts. In the light of the revised model of communication in EIL presented above, we may need to consider the notion of EIL proficiency, at least partly, in terms of exploring various systems of cultural conceptualisations and practice in adopting effective communicative strategies when communicating in EIL contexts. That is, 'more proficient' speakers are those who have been exposed to, and show familiarity with, various systems of cultural conceptualisations, who are capable of participating with flexibility in EIL communication and therefore effectively articulating their cultural conceptualisations to their interlocutors when the need arises. The kind of competence that

underpins the skills described in this chapter may best be termed *metacultural competence*.

In answer to the question of which variety should be chosen as the EIL teaching model, I believe no matter what variety of English the teacher speaks, students need to be exposed to several different varieties in order to get the real sense of EIL speech situations, where people communicate with each other speaking different varieties of English. It should be noted that the speech variety that students develop in their language learning is unlikely to replicate in every detail the one(s) to which they have been exposed. Some students may develop a phonological system close to varieties such as American English while drawing on cultural conceptualisations from their 'native' cultures or the culture that is associated with the taught variety, or they even may blend together aspects of the two sets of cultural conceptualisations to which they have access. Here it should be repeated that the notion of 'cultural conceptualisations' used here does not refer to any static set of conceptual structures, but rather includes conceptualisations that regularly emerge out of the interactions between people from differing cultural backgrounds.

This is one of the most significant implications of the notion of cultural conceptualisations for EIL: as speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds come to interact with each other in English, new systems of cultural conceptualisations may develop, both at the micro-level of the individual speaker and at the macro-level of cultural groups. For example, we have observed Aboriginal children may bring their *Hunting* schema and map it onto the schema that they have learned in English about football. As a result they talk about football using vocabulary items and discourse patterns that reflect the Aboriginal Hunting schema (Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002: 176).

With regard to the notion of 'variety', it should be noted that varieties associated with EIL may not only include, but move beyond, those identified as New Englishes. As mentioned above, communities of EIL learners and users may develop varieties of EIL based on their L1 phonological and grammatical characteristics as well as on the conceptual systems with which they are familiar.

One of the characteristics of these varieties may be a prominent use of particular English words to express certain culturally important 'key words' (Wierzbicka, 1987), or what Roslyn Frank (personal communication) calls 'signatures of identity'. Speakers of Persian may use words such as 'honor', 'reputation' or 'face' in their use of English much more frequently than speakers of American English, for example. In many cases these words are used by Persian speakers to instantiate their Persian cultural schema of *âberu* 'face'. I believe this to be the most significant schema for many Persian speakers, one which constructs their identity in

profound and emotionally motivated ways. It is also associated with a schema that embodies the image of a person, a family or a group, particularly as it is viewed by others in the society. O'Shea (2000: 101) maintains that for Iranians "*Âberu* or honor, is a powerful social force. All Iranians measure themselves to a great extent by the honor they accumulate through their actions and social interrelations". This Persian cultural schema surfaces very frequently in conversations among Persian speakers and often motivates much of the content of their communication. Thus, it would not be surprising to see translated versions of this surface very frequently in Persian speakers' English, although some simply use the Persian word instead. Consider the following examples from some internet postings:

... I think the problem is more giving too much value to your social picture. We have even an important word for it in Farsi, *Aberoo*, that I don't know of a good English equivalent for it.⁸

... However, in any case, denying the existence of the problem never helps solving it. It is much easier to face the issue here without feeling that '*âberoo*' is lost ...⁹

7.4 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have explored the cultural conceptual dimension of EIL observing specifically that in EIL communicative events, speakers are likely to draw on their L1 systems of cultural conceptualisations, perhaps not always realising they are doing so. In such contexts, since English, a common language, is being used for communication, speakers may too easily assume that they mean the same thing when they use the same or similar words. In situations where this assumption is unwarranted, there is a need for the interlocutors to consciously adopt communicative strategies that allow for the explication and clarification of the underlying conceptualisations. This chapter has provided a sketch of some of these strategies, although further and more systematic research will be necessary to fully elucidate them.

8. <http://freethoughts.org/archives/000594.php>

9. <http://parents.berkeley.edu/madar-pedar/transex.html>

CHAPTER 8

Cultural schemas and intercultural communication

A study of Persian

This chapter exploits the notion of cultural schemas to show how intercultural communication may reveal certain cultural norms and values. Examples are given in this chapter from some Persian cultural schemas.

An Iranian student at Shiraz University receives from her American lecturer the recommendation letter that she had asked him to write for her and then turns to him and says, "I'm ashamed". Bewildered by the student's response, the lecturer asks, "What have you done?!!!" (Personal data)

The above case clearly shows an incident of intercultural miscommunication. This miscommunication has arisen from the use of 'I'm ashamed' by the student where she would have been expected to 'thank' the lecturer for writing her a recommendation letter. The aim of this chapter is to shed light on the nature of such miscommunication by drawing on the notion of cultural schema. It is argued here that a disparity in the cultural schemas that the interlocutors bring to a communicative event can lead into misunderstanding and disfluency in communication.

A study of schemas can then shed some light on the factors that may either facilitate or debilitate intercultural communication. As Malcolm, et al. (1999) put it, "[t]he pervasiveness of schemas in approaching and interpreting experience makes them a key element in communicating inclusion or exclusion in intercultural communication" (p. 74). Depending on whether or not and how far experiences are similar across individuals, the schemas that are abstracted from them may be termed 'idiosyncratic', 'cultural', or 'universal'. Idiosyncratic schemas are cognitive entities that are abstracted from the intra-personal experiences of an individual (Rice, 1980). As previously discussed, cultural schemas are conceptual structures that, being shared, enable members of a cultural group to make sense of their cultural experiences (e.g. D'Andrade, 1995; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002; Strauss & Quinn, 1997). Universal schemas, on the other hand, may pertain to patterns of development and experience common to all human beings (Piaget, 1970). Aspects of language that heavily draw on cultural schemas can in fact facilitate intra-cultural communication, while making

intercultural communication more prone to misunderstanding. ‘Outsiders’ may have to live in a cultural group for a while before they are able to operate somewhat within its cultural schemas. Within a cultural group, communication based on cultural schemas would involve much more fluid transfer of messages and would also yield more homogeneous interpretations than communication based on idiosyncratic schemas.

The following section will return to the incident of miscommunication cited in the beginning of this chapter. It will show how certain formulaic expressions associated with a number of speech acts in Persian reveal certain higher level as well as lower level cultural schemas that encompass Persian cultural norms of thought and behaviour. It will be shown how language can provide a window to the underlying levels of cultural cognition. As mentioned in the beginning, the miscommunication between the American lecturer and the Iranian student occurred due to the use of ‘I’m ashamed’ by the student. The key to understanding this incident lies in the following schematic information. The lecturer comes from a cultural-linguistic background (Anglo-English) where ‘I’m ashamed’ would be interpreted to mean “disconcerted by a feeling of distress or humiliation caused by consciousness of the guilt or folly of oneself or an associate” (“The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary”, 1997). Thus, the lecturer is justified within the framework of his own culture and language in feeling surprised by the student’s remark.

However, in Persian (also known as Farsi and the official language of Iranians), the expression *sharmandam*¹⁰, which may be glossed in English as ‘I’m ashamed’, is associated with various speech acts such as expressing gratitude, offering goods and services, apologising, etc. In expressing gratitude, *sharmandam* can be used by itself or in conjunction with some other formulaic expressions. Thus, it can be noted that the student has in fact somehow thanked the lecturer by saying, ‘I’m ashamed’. Still, the mystery is there as to why a person should feel ashamed when asking someone to do something or expressing gratitude for something someone has done for him/her. This is where we need to further relate linguistic behaviour to deeper levels of cultural thinking in order to arrive at the cultural schemas that underlie the use of language by a speech community. The following section will provide a preamble to the discussion of Persian cultural schemas by presenting some background about Persian language and culture.

10. It should be noted that to be syntactically precise *sharmandam* is a short form of *sharmandeh hastam* which is used in Persian Conversational Style and *sharmandeh hastam* may in fact be rendered into English as: *Sharmandeh hastam* ashamed is + am (first person singular marker). However, for the sake of brevity I avoid showing the syntactic details since they may not be the prime area of focus here.

8.1 Persian language and culture

Persian language is a descendant of Indo-Iranian, a sub-branch of Indo-European, and is currently the official language of Iran, but it is also spoken in parts of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Persian has attracted the attention of many scholars for its complex socio-cultural system (e.g. Assadi, 1980, 1982; Beeman, 1976, 1986, 1988, 2001; Eslami Rasekh, 2004; Hillmann, 1981; Hodge, 1957; Keshavarz, 2001; Koutlaki, 2002; Meskub, Perry, Hillman, & Banuazizi, 1992; Modarressi-Tehrani, 2001; Taleghani-Nikazm, 2002; Wilber, 1967). Beeman (1986), for example, observes that, in particular, interpersonal social relations in Iran have been of prime interest to non-Iranians. He believes that the quality of social life in Iran differs significantly from that of even its close neighbours.

For Beeman (1986), personal relations in Iran are comparable to an art that requires sophisticated skills. Personal relations are negotiated largely through communication and thus Beeman observes that for Iranians, verbal skills and language use have a remarkable significance in everyday life. This significance may be reflected in several Persian phrases such as *hormateh kalâm*, roughly meaning 'deference of speech', *ghedâsateh*¹¹ *kalâm*, roughly meaning 'sacredness of speech', and *effateh kalâm*, roughly meaning 'chastity of speech'. Beeman (1986: 2) observes that in Persian communication "a person's verbal performance becomes pregnant as the listener, practising the skills he or she possesses as a communicator, tries to register every nuance of the verbal performance and interpret it successfully".

The above quote from Beeman shows how people from other cultures may somehow be impressed by the verbal art of Iranians, deeply rooted in Persian culture. The following section will explore the cultural schema of *sharmandegi*, through examining its realisation in certain formulaic expressions associated with certain speech acts in Persian.

8.2 *Sharmandegi* (being ashamed)

The notion of *sharmandegi* is a Persian cultural concept which may surface in several formulaic expressions in Persian, such as *sharmandam* (a short form for *sharmandeh hastam* meaning 'I'm ashamed') or *sharmandam mikonid* (meaning 'you make me ashamed'). One frequently hears such expressions in everyday conversations among Iranians, especially when they talk to people who are not very close. In fact, as we observed earlier, an Iranian learner of English may also use the English translation of these expressions in his or her communications with

11. In Persian transcriptions, 'gh' represents a sound that is close to /q/ in the IPA system.

foreigners. These expressions are associated with performing certain speech acts, some of which are discussed below.

8.2.1 Expressing gratitude

Expressions of *sharmandegi*, such as *sharmandam*, either by themselves or in conjunction with certain other formulaic expressions, may be employed to thank someone for the goods or services that one has received from them. In such instances, these expressions can often be followed by other statements that may reveal the speaker's willingness to somehow compensate for what he or she has received. The cultural thinking behind this pattern of linguistic behaviour is the awareness that the other person may have undergone some kind of trouble in providing the speaker with the goods and services and also the awareness that one is not necessarily obligated to provide such services. Thus, the speaker tries to show the awareness of this by uttering a statement which reveals his or her consciousness of the guilt of having caused a person to go to some trouble beyond the bounds of obligation. Hence the use of a sentence which somehow suggests that the speaker is 'ashamed'. Consider the following two sentences, from cyber communication (personal data):

Vâghean ke man ro sharmandeh kardin, I really THANK U ...
Really that me DO marker ashamed you did ...
'You really made me ashamed.'

The above sentence reveals how *sharmandegi* may be associated with an expression of gratitude. It is also interesting to note that the author shows her awareness of the fact that the English translation of *sharmandeh* (i.e. I'm ashamed) may not be appropriate and thus switches to Persian for the expression of *sharmandegi* (i.e. being *sharmandeh*).

8.2.2 Offering goods and services

Another speech act associated with the use of expressions of *sharmandegi* is 'offering goods and services'. It is not rare for Iranians to use *sharmandam* when offering something like food to visitors. Such statements are often accompanied by other formulaic expressions which may undervalue the service being offered or suggest that what is being offered is not worthy of the recipient. In such cases *sharmandegi* is motivated by the value placed on the concept of hospitality and the respect that Iranians hold for their visitors. The following text, uttered by a host when inviting the visitors to partake of the food served at the dinner, exemplifies how *sharmandegi* may be encoded verbally during the invitation:

Khâhesh mikonam befarmâin, sharmandam, ghâbel-e shomâ
 Beg I do help yourself, I'm ashamed, worthy of you
ro nadâreh
 Do marker doesn't have
 'Please help yourself, I'm ashamed, it's not worthy of you.'

In particular, an expression of *sharmandegi* here suggests: (a) the wish that the host or the offerer had rendered the service at a level of quality in consonance with the high degree of esteem that he or she holds for the recipient, and also (b) the guilt that he or she feels for not being able to do so.

8.2.3 Requesting goods and services

Another speech act in Persian associated with the use of *sharmandegi* expressions is that of 'requesting goods and services'. Often, among Iranians one hears that when making a request the speaker either apologises, by saying, for example, *be-bakhshid* meaning 'forgive me', or expresses *sharmandegi* using one of the expressions we have already noted in this chapter. Note the following utterances, said by an Iranian to a colleague:

Sharmandam, mitunam khâhesh konam chand daghighe az vaghtetuno be
 I'm ashamed, can I beg I do some minutes from your time to
man bedid?
 me you give?
 'I'm ashamed, can I beg some minutes of your time?'

In such cases the expression of *sharmandegi* is associated with the guilt felt by the person who is making the request, caused by his/her consciousness that people are not obliged to do such things for each other; he/she is requesting their interlocutor undergo some effort, or at least donate some of their precious time.

8.2.4 Apologising

Finally, there is the last speech act associated with Persian *sharmandegi* which relates to 'apologising'. Consider the following sentence, said by an Iranian to his neighbour apologising for the noise made during their party, which the speaker assumes made it impossible for his neighbour to sleep:

Vâghean sharmandam ke saro sedâyeh bachehâ nagzâsht shomâ bekhâbid.
 Really I'm ashamed that noise from kids didn't let you sleep.
 'I'm really ashamed that the noise from the kids didn't let you sleep.'

The English concept of shame is closer to this usage of *sharmandegi*, one associated with apologising, than in the other abovementioned speech acts. It is simply implying that the person is conscious of the guilt of causing inconvenience to the other person. However, it may not exactly match its English counterpart as the speaker is just *assuming* that the noise prevented the neighbour from trying to sleep. For an English speaker this situation may not necessarily require an apology, especially one associated with an expression of shame.

A close look at the above cases of the expression of *sharmandegi* suggests that they may all be derived from a common schema. This schema seems to encourage Iranians to be hyper-aware of the possibility that in the company of others they may do something wrong or something not in accordance with the other party's dignity. This encourages an Iranian interlocutor to feel guilty and express this guilt verbally. The idea of a common schema underlying the various instances of the use of the expressions of *sharmandegi* is also supported by the observation that all these speech acts may be responded to by the same formulaic expression, such as *doshmanetoon sharmandeh bâsheh*, literally meaning 'your enemy be ashamed'.

My exploration of a number of other speech acts has revealed the operation of other schemas such as *shekasteh-nafsi* and *târof*, which are at a similar level of abstractness as *sharmandegi*. All these schemas, like *sharmandegi*, motivate 'appropriate' thought as well as linguistic and communicative behaviour. These lower-level cultural schemas in fact appear to be informed by a higher-level overarching cultural schema which defines a core cultural value related to social relations that I may call *Adab va Ehterâm*, roughly glossed as 'courtesy and respect' in English. The strength of this higher-level shared schema encourages Iranians to constantly place the presence of others at the centre of their conceptualisations and monitor their own ways of thinking and talking to make them harmonious with the esteem in which they hold others.

Adab and *ehterâm* in culture are very complex concepts. In fact 'courtesy' may not be a good translation for *Adab*. Several words and phrases, such as 'manners', 'etiquette', 'social conduct', 'social ethics', 'politeness', etc., have been proposed as candidates for rendering the concept of *Adab* into English, but none of these may in fact capture the complex networks of meaning expressed by the word *adab* and tightly woven into the fabric of Persian culture. The following sentence from cyber communication (Personal data) once again reflects the fact that Iranians may not find terms such as *adab* to be translatable into English and therefore prefer to opt for the original Persian expression:

... all the morals, '*adab*', discretion, integrity, temperance, and depth that is such an integral part of our culture,

The significance attached to *adab* is also reflected in Persian literature and it might be for this reason that the word *adabiât* meaning literature is often shortened to *adab* to reflect that Persian literature is a mirror of *adab* in the sense discussed above. Writing about the epic of Shah-Nâmeh, written by the world famous Iranian poet Ferdowsi (940–1020 AD), Ichaporia (1994) maintains:

... in Shah-Nameh, one can find scattered among its several volumes, instances of good social customs, good rules, correct manners and wise maxims. The modern Persian word ‘*adab*’, the origin of which is traced to Sassanian Iran, denotes all these together. *Adab* is equivalent to the Middle Persian word ‘*farhang*’ and, is close to another Pahlavi word ‘*ewen*.’ Shah-Nameh defines the word *adab* as ideal refinements of thoughts, words and deeds. This has its origin in the Zarthusti triad of good thoughts, good words and good deeds. The ideal refinements in the form of ethical behavior are manifested throughout the Shah-Nameh.

The following lines from two famous Iranian poets also reveal the value attached to *adab* in Persian literature:

Adab-e mard beh ze dowlat-e ous.
Adab of man better than wealth of him-is.
 ‘A Man’s *Adab* is better than his wealth.’

Bâ adab bâsh tâ bozorg shavi.
 With *adab* be then great become.
 ‘Have *adab* to be great.’

Although an entire book could be written concerning the notion of *adab*, the aforementioned examples should be sufficient for the purpose of introducing it as a schema shaping and informing the linguistic behaviour of Iranians. The same can be said about the concept of *ehterâm*. Translating *ehterâm* as respect is a simplification. Koutlaki (2002: 1742) maintains that *ehterâm* is a near equivalent of “honour, respect, esteem, dignity”. A website has defined *ehterâm* as “regard, respect, reverence”. *Ehterâm* is in fact all of these and much more. Again many Iranians may not find the English translations of *ehterâm* to be forceful enough to convey their esteem for others and therefore may prefer to use the original term when writing in English. The following, which is part of the closing section of an email (personal data), may exemplify this phenomenon:

... Most of them will have their source code included.
bâ ehterâm, (With *ehterâm*)
 F. A. (initials)

The terms *adab* and *ehterâm* refer to one and the same schema. This is because the two notions draw on the same core cultural concept, one that encompasses

every attempt to evoke good feelings in others. *Adab* becomes significant as part of or in expressing *ehterâm*, rather than *per se*. This cultural concern for 'others' which characterises Persian society is what largely drives a person's thoughts and motivates his or her verbal action. In psychological terms, it is more the Other which is attended to, rather than one's Self.

In summary, we have seen how the use of certain expressions can be related to cultural schemas that set out the principles of culturally appropriate conduct. It appears, from this preliminary investigation, that cultural schemas can operate at various levels. For Iranians, for example, *Adab va ehterâm* appears to be a higher-level cultural schema giving rise to certain lower-level schemas, such as *sharmandegi*. Higher-level cultural schemas do not directly determine thought and action on the part of individuals but in fact do so through their instantiation in lower-level cultural schemas. Lower-level cultural schemas are of a higher degree of specificity and resolution regarding the thought and speech of the individual members of a cultural group than higher-level cultural schemas. What it means is that instantiation of cultural schemas in social interactions may take place through several mediating conceptual and linguistic stages. It is through these instantiations that cultural schemas are reinforced and maintained across generations.

As a final point it should be noted that the degree of utilisation and realisation of these schemas in the actual speech acts performed by Iranians largely depends on the relationship between the interlocutors participating in a verbal interaction. That is two close friends may not necessarily draw on the schema of *sharmandegi* in thanking each other.

8.3 Concluding remarks

This chapter set out to add a perspective to intercultural studies by examining a group of cultural schemas which have been defined as conceptual structures that develop at the cultural level of cognition (macro- or group or global level of the system), rather than the psychological level (micro- or individual level of the constituent member agents of the system). Such schemas can motivate thought and behaviour that is considered to be appropriate to a particular cultural group.

The analysis presented in this chapter drew on the verbal art of Iranians to show how communicative behaviour may reveal certain cultural schemas brought by interlocutors to the task of communication, for instance, how a Persian formulaic expression, which can be translated into English as 'I'm ashamed', is in fact associated with certain lower-level as well as higher-level Persian cultural schemas. Unfamiliarity with such schemas may lead to discomfort or misunderstanding during the process of intercultural communication.

PART IV

Cross-cultural pragmatics

CHAPTER 9

The Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi*

Cultural schemas in compliment responses in Persian and Anglo-Australian speakers

This chapter is based on a study that attempts to explicate the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* ‘modesty’. The schema, which appears to be rooted in certain cultural-spiritual traditions of Iranian society, motivates the speakers to negate or scale down compliments, downplay their talents, skills, achievements, etc., and return the compliment to the complimenter. This chapter examines the schema from an ethnographic perspective and also makes use of empirical data to further explore how the schema may be represented in Persian speakers’ replies to compliments. A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and its translated version in English were used to collect Persian and English data from two groups of Iranian and Australian participants. The results revealed that speakers of Persian largely instantiated the cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* in their responses to compliments in both Persian and English. The data from the Australians did not reflect a similar schema but showed a certain degree of overlap with the Persian responses in downplaying any trait that was the target of a compliment. It is hoped this study will increase intercultural understanding, a desire that perhaps more than ever in the history of human interaction desperately needs attention and exploration. A significant finding of the study was that even where this cultural schema is reflected in a speaker’s compliment response in his/her L2 it may be absent from the corresponding L1 response. The findings also suggest that the schema may be instantiated differently according to the context in which the compliment is received. These observations point to the dynamic nature of the relationship between language and cultural conceptualisations. The chapter ends by presenting a discussion of the implications of the findings for the teaching and learning of English as an International Language.

9.1 Cultural schemas and cross-cultural pragmatics

As mentioned repeatedly throughout this book, cultural conceptualisations are instantiated in a variety of cultural artefacts including language and art. In language,

various units – from morphemes to the structure of discourse – often instantiate conceptualisations that are enshrined in cultural systems and worldviews (e.g. Palmer, 1996). Pragmatic aspects of language also entail understandings and interpretations that largely derive from norms and rationalisations sanctioned by cultural systems (see Wierzbicka, 1987, 1991, 1996). It is thus proposed that studies in pragmatics, and in particular cross-cultural pragmatics, should explore the cultural conceptualisations that give rise to the use of pragmatic devices in communication. This approach provides synergy that in turn benefits both of these areas by providing a richer understanding of the cultural roots of pragmatic aspects of communication and also by providing studies of cultural conceptualisations with rigorous methods of pragmatic analysis. The next section elaborates on this proposal.

In the area of cross-cultural pragmatics, researchers examine how pragmatic meanings are communicated in various languages and cultures (e.g. Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Gass & Neu, 1995). It is now widely accepted that different cultures may have different norms for interaction in terms of the structure of conversation as well as the use of pragmatic devices. That is, different cultures may employ different forms to convey similar pragmatic meanings and they may use similar forms to convey different pragmatic meanings. Other cases of pragmatic difference across languages include contexts where speakers from different cultural backgrounds perform different speech acts in similar speech events. For instance, while a speaker from one cultural background may express an ‘invitation’ when offering goods and services, a speaker from a different cultural background may use what might appear as an ‘apology’ in performing the same speech act (Wierzbicka, 1996).

A common tendency in studies of pragmatics and cross-cultural pragmatics is to package pragmatic meanings into functions such as ‘apology’ and ‘making an offer’. While descriptions of this kind are helpful in highlighting cross-cultural differences in language use, if a thorough understanding of human communication is the aim, an in-depth exploration of their cultural underpinnings is called for. Different cultural systems have different rationalisations for the sorts of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour that they encourage among their members. These rationalisations are emergent properties of the interactions of a cultural group, which result from negotiations and renegotiations by its members across generations. It is therefore suggested that studies in pragmatics incorporate an explicit examination of cultural conceptualisations that pragmatic devices arise from, as a new exploratory dimension to their scope of inquiry.

It is to be noted, however, that cross-cultural differences in rationalisations and conceptualisations may not always lead to differences in language use, nor should it be assumed that cross-cultural similarities in language use are always the result of similar rationalisations licensed by different cultures. Histories of different societies

and cultures are characterised by events and processes that shape their cultural cognition. It is possible that different events and processes have similar effects on language use and it is also possible that broadly similar processes and events leave different impacts on the structure of a language and how it is used by its speakers.

At the level of pragmatic meaning, conceptualisations that provide a basis for inferences that speakers make from the use of pragmatic devices by other interlocutors dwell largely in the interactive processes that stabilise as worldview and cultural experience. These cultural conceptualisations deserve a more systematic and explicit exploration if language use is to be understood as an index to people's experience as a whole rather than an isolated skill or faculty.

It is obvious that the kind of exploration proposed requires a combination of rigorous linguistic analysis and in-depth explorations of the cultural conceptualisations embodied in surface features of language use. With regard to the study of pragmatic devices, the proposed approach involves the identification of cross-linguistic differences mobilised in the performance of various speech acts and an exploration of the cultural schemas that underpin the use of these different devices.

Wierzbicka and her colleagues have developed an approach to exploring the cultural underpinning of speech acts known as Natural Semantic Metalanguage (e.g. Wierzbicka, 1991; Wierzbicka & Goddard, 2004). Within this approach, cultural values and attitudes, or what they term 'cultural scripts', which give rise to pragmatic devices, are explicated in terms of a set of fundamental meanings, termed 'semantic primes', alleged to be universal. This approach has some appeal to both 'relativists' and 'universalists'.

The study reported here focused on the explication of the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* based on an empirical investigation of how this schema may be reflected in the responses that speakers of Persian would give to compliments. Research has shown significant differences, as well as similarities, in the way speakers across different speech communities respond to compliments (e.g. Chen, 1993; Golato, 2002; Holmes, 1998; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Nelson, Al-Batal, & Echols, 1996; Pomerantz, 1978; Spencer-Oatey & Ng, 2001; Spencer-Oatey, Ng, & Dong, 2000; Wolfson, 1981, 1983; Wolfson & Manes, 1980; Ye, 1995; Yuan, 1996). Against this background, the following section elaborates on the cultural schemas that underlie the use of the Persian cultural key word *shekasteh-nafsi*.

9.2 The cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* in Persian

Shekasteh-nafsi is a compound in Persian made up of the morphemes *shekasteh* 'broken' and *nafs* 'self' (see Chapter 11 for an extended discussion of *nafs*). The compound as a whole may be literally glossed in English as 'self-breaking' or

'doing self-broken'. The closest concept in English to this Persian schema would be 'modesty' or 'humility'. Aryanpur Persian-English Dictionary translates the noun *shekasteh-nafsi* into English as 'humility', and the verb *shekasteh-nafsi kardān* as 'to humiliate oneself, to forbear from making pretensions'. The concept of modesty may be claimed to be a universal concept in human behaviour. However, I maintain that it is not merely the presence or absence of the concepts in different languages which merits attention but also the ways, and the extent to which, people's speech and behaviour are influenced by these concepts, as well as how these concepts are lexicalised and conventionalised in different languages. The equivalent to the word 'freedom' for example, may exist in all languages, but the exact nature of the conceptualisations that the word instantiates may be largely culture-specific. Many words of human languages, I maintain, are indexes to complex conceptualisations that are deeply seated in histories of cultural experience and worldview.

In the light of the above proposition, I argue that the word *shekasteh-nafsi* in Persian is different from 'modesty' in English, as it is used in Western cultures, in that they refer to two distinct but overlapping cultural schemas. In circumstances when an Iranian receives praise for an achievement or success, the cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* encourages the receivers of the praise to downplay their own role in the achievement or the success that is the target of the praise and attribute the success to the interlocutor(s), or somehow make them share the praise. If the interlocutor(s) are clearly outside the domain of the praise, the speaker may attribute their success to other people, like their parents, God, or simply to fate or luck.

The cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* encourages the speakers who receive praises and compliments on their talents and gifts to downplay these attributes. Such behaviour is viewed as a sign of highly developed *shekasteh-nafsi* in the light of the same cultural schema. In cases where the same or a similar talent is also observed in the interlocutor, the schema encourages the speaker to point out the other person's talent and to stress its comparative magnitude.

Overall, the schema encourages the speaker to use the situation in which praise is received to enhance the 'face' of their interlocutor, their family, or whoever might have directly or indirectly contributed to the speaker's success or achievement. In general, in Persian communication, every communicative chance is utilised for enhancing the 'face' of the family, friends, and other associates. In Persian culture, the 'face' of an individual hinges, to a large extent, on the 'face' of the networks and groups that an individual belongs to, such as the extended family.

Another rationale in the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* for including others in the success or the achievement being praised is to rescue the listener from any sense of inferiority or anxiety they would not be able to achieve the same success. Therefore, there are cases where the speaker might somehow

acknowledge the compliment by thanking the other person while still making a remark suggesting that their success or talent is not as good as the one achieved or possessed by the initiator of the compliment, their associates, or other interlocutors. In general, the cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* encourages the speakers to view success and achievement as a result of various factors and forces which do not stem solely from the self. In fact, this schema discourages any form of 'self endearing' which would imply the exclusion of others. This aspect of the schema has implications for how psychological traits such as 'self-esteem' and 'self-confidence' are viewed. 'Self', according to this schema, is a relational entity and is defined with respect to its association with a whole host of 'others', including one's family and friends. In fact, placing 'self' or its associates in the centre of discourse, for purposes such as praise, may provoke negative images in the audience.

Ahmadi and Ahmadi (1998: 110) contrast Western ways of thinking with the Iranian way of thinking and note that in Iranian ways of thinking an individual's value is not so much tied to their 'self' but to their relationship with 'other selves'. Ahmadi and Ahmadi observe that "in Iranian society, there is a tight bond between the good of oneself and of others" (1998: 110). They contrast this Iranian way of thinking with Western thought in which the paramount value is often given to the individual, as an independent, autonomous being.

It should be pointed out here that in general the way the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* encourages the speakers to respond to compliments appears to be somehow parallel to the case of several non-Western cultures. For example, several studies have found that blatantly accepting compliments is considered as impolite in Chinese culture (see Chen, 1993; Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Loh, 1993; Spencer-Oatey & Ng, 2001; Yuan, 1996). The rest of this chapter is an account of an empirical attempt that was carried out to further explore the Persian schema of *shekasteh-nafsi*. Data were collected, using a Discourse Completion Test, to examine the degree to which responses to complimenting situations by the Persian speakers would reflect this cultural schema. The patterns of responses were then compared with those given by a reference group of Australian English speakers. The following section further elaborates on the methodology that was employed in the empirical section of the study.

9.3 Methodology

The data were collected from the Persian speakers in their L1 and L2. The particular aim was to compare the degree to which the L1 and L2 (English) responses to compliments by speakers of Persian reflect the schema of *shekasteh-nafsi*. These responses were compared to those of Anglo-Australians. The study also sought

to explore whether the schema was activated differently according to the context in which the compliments are received. The following section elaborates on the methodology employed in the empirical section of the study.

9.3.1 Participants

Thirty Persian speakers and thirty Australian speakers, both male and female, participated in this study on a voluntary basis. The Persian speakers ranged in age from 16 to 36 ($M = 25$) and the Australians from 17 to 50 ($M = 26.5$). About two-thirds of the participants across the two groups were female. Persian-speaking participants were recruited from among a group of Iranians who had studied English, regularly or irregularly, for an average period of three years, either at a language school or at a university. Most were studying at an intermediate level in an English Language Institute in Tehran at the time of data collection.

9.3.2 Instrument

In order to replicate communicative events in which the Persian interlocutors would be most likely to draw on the schema of *shekasteh-nafsi*, a Discourse Completion Test (or Task) (DCT hereafter) was prepared with ten complimenting situations (see below under ‘Data Analyses’). Although DCT has been judged to be inadequate as a research method on many grounds¹², it is still advantageous for keeping variables rather constant and in enabling a large amount of data to be collected in a relatively short period of time (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001). DCTs seem to be more effective when they are used as part of ethnographic studies where the researcher, as an insider, can monitor the validity of the findings and can provide an *emic* perspective on the cultural dimension of the observed linguistic behaviour, as has been attempted in this study. One drawback of DCTs is that data cannot be collected beyond an adjacency pair, even though compliment exchanges tend to last over a number of turns in Persian. Furthermore, the main aim of this study was not to locate patterns of actual usage but to explore the patterns of schema activation that appeared to underlie the usage, and for this purpose the DCT seemed to provide an appropriate means to collect data.

In the DCT the ten items that were employed in the study tried to capture a variety of situations and a variety of roles with different social distances. In

12. For example, it has been reported that “DCT responses are shorter in length, simpler in wording, less face-attentive and negotiatory in the negotiation process, and less emotionally involved than naturally-occurring speech” (Yuan, 2001: 272).

particular, the situations included compliments given by a family member, a superior, a former teacher, a colleague/classmate, and some friends. These compliments were given for an achievement, a possession, or a talent. Each item described a situation and invited the participants to imagine themselves in the described situation and write down their most probable responses to the given compliment. In general, the scenarios and the people involved in them represented prototypical situations of compliment exchange in Persian culture.

The DCTs were prepared both in English and Persian. Items were checked and verified for their authenticity of language by several native speakers of each language. The DCTs started by asking demographic questions regarding the age, gender and cultural background of the participants. The initial instruction for the participants was as follows:

You are kindly asked to fill out this questionnaire to contribute to a research project on “Language and Culture”. What you are invited to do is to imagine yourself in the following described situations and write down your most probable response to the given compliments.

The Persian speakers received the Persian version of the above instruction. Finally, the DCT provided space for the participants to record any comments that they might have regarding the questionnaire.

9.3.3 Procedure

Both groups of participants completed the DCT in one session; however, the Iranian participants completed the English DCT first and then received and completed the Persian version after an interval of two weeks. This order was observed to avoid the possibility of Persian responses having a washback effect on the English ones. The participants were given adequate time to complete the tasks at their own pace.

9.4 Data analysis

The data were summarised, coded and subjected to close scrutiny in the light of the objectives of the study. In particular, comparisons were made between the responses provided by the Persian speakers and those given by the Australian speakers. The responses by the Persian speakers were analysed in terms of the degree to which they reflected the schema of *shekasteh-nafsi*. The following section presents separate analyses for each item in the questionnaire. To save on space, the expressions of gratitude (e.g. *besiâr sepâsgozâram* ‘many thanks’) that typically started the compliment responses are excluded from the analysis presented. It

should also be noted that in order to be able to highlight linguistic strategies that best reflect cultural conceptualisations, the results are not presented in statistical terms for the aim of the study was not to simply count instances of particular responses, but rather to explore the schemas that appeared to underlie them. In other words, the main issue was not the number of times a response was used but whether it was informed by the cultural schema in question and in what context. The basis for labelling the compliment responses in this study was Herbert's (1990) scheme, although categories such as 'apology' were added to this scheme. It should be reiterated that the aim of the analysis presented here is to show how the cultural schema informs compliment responses in both L1 and L2.

Item 1

You have recently made an impressive achievement such as passing the University Entrance Examination and you come across one of your previous teachers. He/She is so happy to hear the news and congratulates you on your success as follows:

A: Congratulations! You did a great job. Well done!!

You:

The analysis of the Persian DCTs showed that 28¹³ of the Persian speakers started their responses to the above item with some form of expressing gratitude such as *motoshakeram* 'thanks' or an expression of heightened gratitude such as *besiâr sepâsgozâram* 'thanks so much'.¹⁴ Also, 18 of the participants somehow attributed their imagined success to their teacher. These included responses such as (a) below:

- a. *man in movaffaghiat ro madyuneh zahamâteh shomâ hastam va ageh yârieh shomâ nabud hargez be in moafaghiat dast peidâ nemikardam.*
'I owe this achievement to your efforts; if it hadn't been for your help I would never have achieved this.'

In one case, the participant attributed her success both to the teacher and to God. Other responses included an expression of satisfaction (e.g. *man kheili khosh-hâlam*) and several cases of the use of the Persian formulaic routine *lotf dârin*, roughly meaning 'you are kind' or 'that's so kind of you' (to say that). This formula attributes the compliment to the kindness of the complimenter, which is a 'return' strategy (Herbert, 1990: 208).

13. The tallies of responses do not add up to the total number of participants because one participant could have used several expressions in response to a compliment.

14. It is to be noted that the English translations provided may not reveal certain stylistic characteristics found in the Persian expressions. For instance, the expression *besiâr sepâsgozâram* is a more formal, more polite form than 'thanks so much'.

The analysis of the English responses of the Persian speakers revealed a decrease (from 18 to 12) in the rate of responses that attributed the success to the teacher. The English responses included expressions such as “but I owe my success all to you” or “indeed I have to appreciate you for my success”. Again there was one case of attributing the success to God, but there was also one case of attributing the success to parents. Other expressions included “that’s your kindness” or “it’s kind of you”. Finally, there were three cases of the use of comments such as “I was trying hard to catch it” or “it has been my dream for a long time”. This kind of response is referred to as ‘Comment History’, where some background information related to the object of compliment is provided (Herbert, 1990: 208). This type of response is viewed as non-acceptance of the compliment, as it diverts the force of the compliment and praise towards something else.

The analysis of the responses given by the Australian speakers to Item 1 showed that all participants used some expression of gratitude or heightened gratitude (e.g. “cheers mate!”). One participant attributed ‘a big part’ of her success to her teacher and another one thanked his teacher for teaching him. A 49-year-old participant thanked God for her achievement. One third of the participants expressed some degree of satisfaction with their achievement (e.g. “I’m really pleased about it”). Other comments included “I worked for it hard though” and “all I had to do is try hard enough”.

Overall, the responses from the Persian speakers largely appeared to represent the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* in that they mostly attributed the success for which the compliment was given to the teacher, to their parents, or to God. As has been shown, Persian culture strongly emphasises acknowledging people and factors which have led to one’s success, apart from one’s own efforts. Teachers are usually held in a very high esteem for their contribution to one’s knowledge and moral values. Many Iranians continue to appreciate their teachers in various ways for what they have learned from them even years after they ceased studying with the teachers.

Item 2

A family friend compliments your cooking after dinner by saying, “Your food is so delicious. You’re a fantastic cook!”

You:

The analysis of the Persian responses to the above item showed that 15 participants started their responses by somehow thanking the friend, four either denied that their food was delicious or that they were good cooks, and three reassigned the praise to their interlocutor, as in (a) below:

- a. *vali beh pâyeh dast pokhteh shomâ nemireseh.*
‘But not as good as your cooking.’

One participant attributed her good cooking skill to her mother and another one apologised that there was not sufficient food. It is to be noted that 28 of the respondents wrote multiple expressions, even up to four, in response to the compliment. For instance, one participant started with two expressions of gratitude (*merci, kheili mamnun*, 'thanks, thanks very much'), followed by the formulaic *lotf dârin* 'you are kind (to say that)' and went on to use an expression that somehow denied the basis of the praise (*aslan intoriâm keh migin nist* 'it's not at all like what you say'). One respondent attributed her cooking skills to her mother and another respondent apologised that there was not sufficient food, which is a very common response to this kind of compliment in Persian. That is, although a host may spend a considerable amount of effort and time in preparing food for their guests, they still, largely in a gesture of politeness, apologise for the quality and the quantity of food. Among the Persian responses, eight used the formulaic expression *nusheh jân*, which is functionally similar to "hope you enjoyed the food", and three used the expression *ghâbeli nadâsht* 'it was not worthy (of you)'. The latter is a very common formulaic expression in Persian conversations in general, which once again reflects the extent to which Persian culture encourages the speakers to hold their interlocutors, particularly their guests, in high esteem.

Among the English response of the Iranians, three disagreed that they were good cooks (i.e. "but I know I am not skillful cook"). One participant reassigned the praise to her parents and one to her husband (i.e. "but it was my husband who prepared the things for me to cook"). Two participants praised the complimenter's taste (e.g. "you have a very good taste", "you eat well") and 10 used various translations of *lotf dârin* (i.e. 'it's very kind of you', 'that's your favour', etc). It should be noted that this expression could imply disagreement with the praise in that it attributes the statement of the praise to the kindness of the complimenter. Other responses included comment histories such as "I cooked without oil" and an offer of the recipe. One participant who used the expression *khejâlatam nadid* in his Persian DCT used its close equivalent 'don't embarrass me' in the English DCT.

The responses from the Australian participants were now closer to the Persian responses than for the previous item. Twenty participants thanked the speaker and four either denied that the food was "that great" or that they were good cooks (e.g. "I never think of myself as being a good cook"). One case of the denial of being a good cook was followed by "but [I] made a supreme effort for tonight". One participant attributed his good cooking skill to his father and two others asked if the speaker was joking.

Among other Australian responses, four expressed a love for cooking, one agreed to the compliment by saying "well, I am", and another said "I try". One salient feature of the Australian data was the emergence of an Australian sense of humour, which was reflected in the following responses:

- a. I poisoned it just for tonight.
- b. It all came out of a can.

Overall, the comparison of the two sets of responses reveals a higher tendency on the part of the Persian speakers to somehow divert or deny the praise, which is again in consonance with the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi*. As mentioned earlier, this schema encourages the speakers to downplay their talents and skills while praising the same skill in their interlocutors, or attributing the skill to their family members or friends.

Item 3

Your friend praises your child by saying, “You have a very smart child”.

You:

The Persian responses to the above item include 18 expressions of either gratitude or heightened gratitude and 10 cases of the use of the formulaic *lotf dârin* ‘you are kind’. Three participants toned down the praise, either by moderating it (e.g. *in-tor ke shomâ mifarmâyin nist* ‘it is not like what you say’) or by characterising the child as being mischievous, as in (a) below:

- a. *Lotf dârin bacheyeh aziat kono sheitunieh.*
‘You are kind (to say that) he is troublesome and mischievous.’

The Iranians’ English responses were more or less translated versions of the Persian responses except the following:

Persian	English
a. <i>Kheili mamnun, fekr mikonam be pedaram raftah ast</i> (thanks very much, I think he/she takes after my father)	I’m so happy to have such a good friend as you. It will be very kind of you. You encourage me to practice with him more.
b. <i>Kheili mamnun, mesleh mâmânesheh, na?</i> (jokingly) (Thanks very much, he/she is like his/her mom, isn’t he/she?)	Thank you, he is like his mommy’s friend (you).
c. <i>Motoshakeram, un bâhush hast vali kheili ham sheituneh</i> (Thanks, she is smart but she is also very naughty.)	Yes she is. She tries her best for everything

It can be seen that the first two English responses given by two different participants return the praise to the first speaker while the third one accepts the praise and reinforces it. A noteworthy pattern that emerges from the above table is that in (a) the schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* is reflected in both the Persian and

the English responses, in (b) it is reflected in the English response, while in (c) it is reflected in the Persian response. As mentioned earlier, the schema encourages the speakers to reassign the praise to the complimenter and/or to somehow play down the praise. It seems that the cultural schema may be instantiated in a speaker's L1, L1 and L2, or only in their L2. This is a significant finding in that it reveals that cultural schemas are not linked to language in a fixed manner, and that bilingual and multilingual speakers may instantiate their cultural schemas dynamically across languages.

Seven participants attributed the child's smartness either to themselves, jokingly, or to the participant's father or spouse. One response put the friend's child on top (*na be andâzeyeh bacheyeh shomâ* 'not as much as your child'). One participant used the formulaic expression *gholâme shomâst* '(he/she) is your servant'. Most Persian responses were clearly reflective of *shekasteh-nafsi* schema.

In the Australian data, nine responses expressed some form of gratitude. Sixteen responses acknowledged the child's talent and elaborated on it, as in (a) and (b) below:

- a. Yeah, he's always been gifted.
- b. And she's nice as well, thanks.

Four Australian participants likened the child to themselves (e.g. "Just like me") and others made comments such as 'but you should tell *them*, they'll appreciate it more'. An interesting remark made by an Australian, in addition to her response to Item 3, was "I thought it is an unusual thing to say". This remark seems to point to a difference in the schemas that different cultures have about situations that deserve compliments. Australians, for example, appear to find the frequency and the formality of the compliments given by the Persian speakers 'over the top'. It is to be noted that the scenarios chosen in the present study were mainly based on their appropriateness for Persian speakers, as the study mainly focused on the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi*.

Item 4

You have bought a new dress/suit and your colleague/classmate says to you, "What a nice dress/suit! You have a very good taste in clothes".

You:

Among the responses to the Persian version of the above item, 22 expressed gratitude or heightened gratitude. One placed the colleague/classmate on top (*albateh beh hadeh shomâ keh nemiresheh* 'but not as much as yours') and another downplayed her taste (*injuri keh to migi nist* 'it's not like what you say'). Nine participants used the formulaic *ghâbeli nadâreh* 'it's not worthy (of you)'. Used in such contexts as this item, this expression is to be taken as an expression of offer. Whether or not

the offer is a genuine one or simply a gesture of politeness depends on the degree to which the speaker would insist on the offer. One of the nine participants who used this expression also agreed to the compliment and commented that she has searched the whole city to find the dress.

Among the other responses, seven were the formulaic *cheshmâtun ghashang mibineh* 'your eyes see beautifully', which is a form of reassigning the compliment to the other speaker. One participant liked the colour of the dress and another one said, "we have the same taste". Among the English responses, two included the giver of the compliment in the praise, in a rather subtle way, as follows:

- a. You are correct, but might have forgotten that a month ago we purchased together, almost same decision for fabric.
- b. And also I have a very good taste in friends and that's why I have chosen you a perfect partner as a friend.

The social experience of the author of this chapter suggests these attempts, although made in the artificial situation of the DCT, reflect real-life strategies that speakers of Persian may employ in instantiating their cultural schemas, including the schema of *shekasteh-nafsi*.

Among other English responses, one offered to buy the same dress for the colleague/classmate and one remarked "if you want you can have it". One participant deflected the compliment and said it was an accident. Another participant remarked that the complimenter's dress was better and four speakers used "on your eyes", which is an attempt to render the Persian expression *cheshmâtun ghashang mibineh* 'your eyes see beautifully' into English. Another participant said he thought the colleague/classmate exaggerated his good taste and three other female participants attributed the good taste to their husband or girlfriend, who bought the dress/clothes for them. Other comments included "all yours for keeps", "it's very kind of you", and "does it go with me?"

Among the Australian responses, 20 started with thanking the colleague/classmate and two expressed that it was not expensive. One participant wrote "I deserved it blu blu blu" and two remarked that their mother helped them choose the dress/clothes. Four responses included an element of humour such as "you should see me on a Saturday morning". One participant asked if the colleague/classmate was being sarcastic. Other comments were varied and included remarks such as "I fell in love with it myself".

Overall, it can be seen that several of the responses given by the Persian speakers are in consonance with the cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* in that they try to either deny or downplay the praise while somehow reassigning the praise to the interlocutor or to a family member. The Australian responses, however, did not appear to be attempting to involve the other interlocutor in their replies to the compliments.

Item 5

Your friend is visiting your newly-built house and says, “What a beautiful house!”
You:

The analysis of the responses to the Persian version of the above item shows that 22 respondents expressed some degree of gratitude, four used the expression *lotf dârin* ‘you are kind’, and three used *cheshmâtun ghashang mibineh* ‘your eyes see beautifully’. Among other responses there were five usages of *ghabeli nadâreh* ‘it is not worthy (of you)’ and one was *khuneyeh khodetuneh* ‘it’s your house’. Another participant thought the friend had good taste to have liked the house, and two hoped that their friend would also buy one. Other remarks included *mikhay berim tu otâghâ gashti bezanim?* ‘do you want to have a look around the house?’ and *bâ budjeyeh man in behtarin khuneyi bud ke tunestam peidâ konam* ‘with my budget, this was the best house that I could find’.

The Iranians’ English responses included one case of negation of praise, two cases of reassigning the compliment to the husband, and one of returning the compliment by praising the friend’s taste. Some responses were simply verbatim attempts to translate the Persian responses, such as the following:

Persian	English
a. <i>Ghâbel-e shomâro nadâreh</i> (It’s not worthy of you)	Don’t cost
b. <i>Omidvâram shomâ ham bekharid</i> (I hope you buy one too)	I hope you buy one like it
c. <i>Khâhesh mikonam khooneyeh khodetooneh</i> (please, it is your house)	You’re welcome, it is your house.

Among the Persian and English responses, some provided history comments such as explaining how hard it was to build the house, how long it took, etc. (e.g. “Yes, it’s beautiful, but its price was very expensive. I was very tired until it was finished.”). A noteworthy case where the English response was more reflective of the Persian schema than the same participant’s Persian response was the following:

Persian	English
<i>Kheili motoshakeram, man ham hamintor fekr mikonam, ehsâseh râhati mikonam</i> (Thank you very much. I think so too. I feel comfortable)	Thank you very much your kind eyes look at everything positively

Here the English response seems to be an attempt to convey a meaning in English that is similar to *cheshmâtun ghashang mibineh* ‘your eyes see beautifully’. Another case of returning the praise was where the speaker used *ghâbeli nadâreh* ‘it is not worthy (of you)’ in Persian but responded as (a) below in English:

- a. I wish I will tell you someday. But I prefer to tell you your house is the most beautiful one.

The Australian responses included 15 expressions of gratitude or heightened gratitude, and 13 expressions of satisfaction, such as the following:

- a. Yeah, we really love it.
- b. Thank you, it is lovely, isn’t it?
- c. Yeah, cool, isn’t it?

Four Australian participants made remarks about the design, materials and the size of the project. One remarked, “lucky we don’t live in Japan where it could fall apart due to an earthquake”. Another participant offered to show the friend around and one made the comment “I know, we’re getting a bit posh now (ironic)”. Two participants somehow toned down the praise as follows:

- a. Yeah, it’s not bad.
- b. Yeah, I try, you know, it’s a house.

Overall, once again the majority of Persian responses reflect various aspects of the *shekasteh-nafsi* schema while the Australian responses were mainly expressions of gratitude and satisfaction. There is, however, some degree of overlap in the two sets of responses in terms of downplaying the achievement:

Item 6

You have bought a brand new car. Your friend likes your car and says to you “You have a very nice car!”

You:

The Persian responses to the above item include 18 expressions of gratitude or heightened gratitude, nine cases of *ghâbeli nadâreh* ‘it’s not worthy (of you)’, and two cases of *cheshmâtun ghashang mibineh* ‘your eyes see beautifully’. Two offered their car any time (*harvaght ehtiâj dâshtin mitunin begirin* ‘you may borrow it any time you need it’) and two offered a try. One attributed her taste in cars to her father and another remarked *man harchi dâram az shomâ dâram* meaning ‘everything I have is from you’.

Two Persian respondents somehow toned down the praise by pointing out a downside of the car, as follows:

- a. *Kheili motoshakeram vali kheili zud az model mioftâd*
‘Thanks very much, but it quickly goes out of fashion.’
- b. *Merci, kheili khubeh, vali ghodratesh ânghadr ke tavagho’ mireh nist, rangesho bishtar mipasandam*
‘Thanks, it’s very good, but its engine power is not as much as expected, I like its colour better.’

Among other responses one hoped that the friend would also buy one and another jokingly remarked that its price was also beautiful. Three other respondents expressed satisfaction with their purchase; two of them also added that they had long been waiting for that to happen.

Several of the Iranians’ English responses appeared to be close renderings of the Persian responses. Two responses, however, seemed to be stronger in English than in Persian in that they simply offered the car to the friend (e.g. “I can give it to you if you want”). One case of downgrading the car was, “I didn’t like it much. But now I think I would be better to keep that”. Other replies included, “not bad, I like it, it is at your service”, and “Thank God, that’s very kind of you”. Finally, a participant who offered to let their friend drive the car in Persian, employed a noteworthy ‘return’ strategy in his English response:

- a. Thanks, but I have something more valuable than that and that’s my friend, you.

The Australian responses included 18 cases of expressing gratitude and nine cases of expressing satisfaction (e.g. “I know, it’s great, huh!”). Three respondents made the following comments:

- a. No, you may not have a drive.
- b. It cost me an arm and half a leg.
- c. Her name is Cheryl (joke).

Overall, the pattern of responses to this item was in consonance with the previous analysis presented in this chapter. That is, the majority of the Persian responses reassigned the praise to the friend, offered the car to the friend, and/or downplayed the value of the car, which are all largely instantiations of the *shekasteh-nafsi* schema. It is to be noted that the Australian participants tended to downplay their talent (see Item 2) but not their possessions when receiving compliments for them.

Item 7

After reading your essay, your friend/classmate says to you, “You’re very intelligent and knowledgeable!”

You:

The analysis shows that 12 Persian speakers expressed some degree of gratitude and 10 used the formulaic *lotf dârin* 'you are kind'. Three toned down the praise (e.g. *vali unghadr ham man bâhush nistam* 'but I'm not that intelligent') and one expressed embarrassment. One participant returned the praise as follows:

Âkh jun cheh dusteh khubi, az in be ba'd dar moredeh maghâlehâm az to nazar mikhâm

'Wow, what a good friend! From now on I'll ask you about my essays.'

One of the Persian participants hoped that the friend/classmate was right and another one attributed the success to hard work. One jokingly said she knew about it and another one asked how she could compensate for the kindness that the friend/classmate had just shown. The analysis of the Iranians' English responses to Item 7 revealed that nine respondents disagreed that they were intelligent and knowledgeable (e.g. "Oh. No. I know you are just kidding"). One respondent disagreed that he was intelligent and reassigned the compliment by stating that his father had written the essay. Two other participants remarked that they received help from their family members, one from her brother and one from a relative. Four participants thought the friend/classmate was very kind to give the compliment. One participant returned the praise to the complimenter as follows:

- a. Not as well as you, you learn and help me to write.

It is to be noted that the strategy of denial was more frequent among the responses to this item, and this is because in this case the target of the compliment was the respondent's intelligence and not just a house or a car.

Among the Australian data, there were 12 expressions of gratitude or heightened gratitude, and two expressed embarrassment over the praise. Three laughed while one of them added that she wondered if the compliment was sarcastic. One also thanked the friend/classmate and put 'awkward, pause' in brackets next to her response. The remarks to this item that appear to have meant to convey some degree of humour were "SOS the Internet", and "I copied it off the Internet". One 49-year-old participant stated that she just prayed and studied hard. Four participants agreed to the comment about their knowledge and intelligence and thanked the friend/classmate.

Among other Australian data, one asked the friend/classmate to get serious and one wrote, "I'm sure yours is just as good, it's probably better". This sentence was at odds with the rest of the Australian data and closer to a good number of Persian responses. The rest of the Australian responses to this item showed a tendency to rule out intelligence while attributing the success to hard work, study, or research. This denial of superior intelligence may derive from the egalitarian attitude characteristic of Australian culture.

Item 8

Your superior finds you very busy with your work and says to you, “You’re a real hard worker!”.

You:

Among the Persian responses to the above item there were 12 expressions of gratitude or heightened gratitude. Six participants remarked that they were just doing their duty, five said that they liked their job very much and one agreed to the comment. One hoped that the quality of his work was also high and four remarked that they had to work hard to support their life. Four participants used the expression *nazareh lotfetuneh* ‘it’s your kindness’ and another one used the formulaic expression *khâhesh mikonam khejâlatam nadid* ‘please, don’t make me embarrassed’.

Among those who somehow involved the superior in their replies, one maintained that he had to work hard to please the superior. Another thanked the superior and expressed heightened satisfaction for having a boss who would notice his hard work. A participant achieved this communicative goal in a more subtle way, as follows:

- a. *baleh barâyeḥ residaneḥ be ahdâf bâyaḍ chon riâsat fekr konam, bâyaḍ sakht kâr konam*
 ‘Yes, in order to achieve the aims, I should think like the boss, I should work hard.’

As for the Iranians’ English data, six participants somehow justified their hard work (i.e. “I have to, so that I can prepare anything I need”) and one agreed that she was working hard but added, “but it is so boring”. This type of response is referred to as “Qualification” (Herbert, 1990: 209). One participant used “I am at proposal”, which seems to be an attempt to render the Persian formulaic expression *dar khedmat hâzerim* lit. ‘I am ready at (your) service’. One participant denied that she was working hard and one was wondering if she had to try more (i.e. “Don’t you think I should try more?”). Two participants stated that they just tried their best and one expressed satisfaction about being a workaholic (i.e. “I am pleased to be a workaholic person”).

Overall, the Persian responses to this item revealed a lower tendency than responses to previous items to deny what was being praised, while there was an increase in expressions of interest in it (e.g. “I like my job very much”). This might have arisen from the fact that disagreeing that one works hard may leave a negative impression with one’s superior, perhaps implying that work obligations are not being fulfilled.

Eighteen Australian respondents expressed some degree of gratitude, five stated that they liked their job, three maintained they were just trying to get the job done, and five used “I try”. Other replies included: “Well, I am sometimes”, “Have been all my life”, “I do my best”, and “I’m glad you think so”. There was only one response which somehow involved the superior and that was “It’s great to hear that a hard worker can identify another”. One of the participants also wondered if the superior was being sarcastic. Among the Australian data, the following included some element of humour, wit, sarcasm, etc.:

- a. Don’t get used to it (sarcastically)
- b. How about a pay raise?
- c. It’s what I do (witty).
- d. Only when your [sic] looking.

Here a comparison of these responses with those given by the Persian speakers suggests a possible cross-cultural difference in the relationship between people and their superiors, which is in consonance with the author’s intuition regarding the two cultures. Iranian people in general appear to be more conscious of status than Anglo-Australian people, and they also try to express their status-consciousness in their discourse. Australian people, on the other hand, are generally more relaxed, at least than most Iranians, in their relationship with their superiors.

Overall, the Persian responses to this item reveal a lower tendency, than previous cases, to deny what was being praised, with an increase in expressions of interest in it (e.g. “I like my job very much”). The degree of involvement of the interlocutor in the praise was still significantly greater in the Persian data than in the Australian data.

Item 9

You have received a prize for your outstanding work and your mother says to you, “Congratulations! Well done!”

You:

Among the Persian responses to the above item, there were 20 expressions of gratitude or heightened gratitude. Ten respondents replied that it was all the result of their mother’s efforts, kindness, or guidance, and one said it would not have been made possible without the mother’s help. Four either forwarded the prize to their mother as a gift for their efforts, or remarked that the prize should in fact go to their mother. Four others expressed appreciation to their mother for the help that they had received from her and one participant thought the prize might have made up for just a small part of his mother’s efforts. One participant jokingly asked for a prize from his mother. The following were among the Persian responses:

- a. *Kheili mamnunam, zahamâteh to ro hichvaght farâmush nemikonam, aziztarin yâreh man dar zendegi toyi va in moafaghiat ro be to taghdim mikonam.*
‘Thanks very much, I’ll never forget your efforts, you are my dearest companion and I dedicate this success to you.’
- b. *mâmân in jâyezeh moto’alegh be shomâst.*
‘Mum, this prize belongs to you.’
- c. *man vojadam ro madyuneh shomâ hastam*
‘I owe my existence to you.’
- d. *kheili mamnun mâdar, in movaffaghiat râ madyuneh hemâyat-hâye behdarigheh shomâ hastam va dar asl in hedieh beh shomâ ta’alogh dâreh*
‘Thanks very much mum, I owe this achievement to your selfless support and in fact this gift belongs to you.’

The Iranians’ English responses appeared to be translated versions of the Persian responses, except for a few differences. One participant who thanked her mother in Persian used “Ok, that’s OK” in English. Two participants included their father in the praise (e.g. “In fact, this prize should be given to you and my dear father”) and two downplayed their achievement (e.g. “it’s not a big deal”). One participant used “you have right on my neck”, which appears to be a verbatim translation of the Iranian formulaic expression *shomâ beh gardaneh man hagh dârid*, ‘I am indebted to you.’ The following were among the English responses given by the Persian speakers:

- a. Mom, thank you but it is all because of you.
- b. Thank you, I dedicate it to you, here you are.
- c. Thank you dear mom, I am sure also you were too effective in my succeed, you, father, and all universe.

Among the Australian data, there were 24 expressions of gratitude or heightened gratitude. Two participants added the parenthetical remark (hug) to their responses and one added (very proud). One participant wrote she was proud of herself, too, and one felt fantastic while thanking her mum for her help. Another participant used “fank woo mama bear (baby voice)”, and one used “woo hoo”. One asked if he could move out now and another remarked “I know mum, I’m a champ, check me out”. Among the other responses from the Australians were: “Thanks, I got my work ethics from you”, “It was touch and go for a while”, and “it was really nothing”.

Overall, it can clearly be seen that while the Persian speakers predominantly attributed their success to their parent, the Australian speakers largely expressed satisfaction with what they achieved. The results from the Persian speakers once again reflect the cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* in that the speakers attribute their achievements to their parents, and interestingly in one case to “all the universe”.

Item 10

You have an admirable talent such as a very good handwriting or a beautiful voice and a friend says to you, "What a beautiful handwriting!/voice!!"

You:

Among the Persian responses to the above item, there were 20 expressions of gratitude or heightened gratitude. Six participants remarked that it was God's gift and one apologised for giving the friend a headache. One owed his talent to his teacher and also thanked God for it. Two participants thought that the friend also had a lot of good qualities (e.g. *albateh mo 'taghedam shomâ ham mahâseneh ziâdi dârid* 'of course I believe you also have a lot of good qualities'). One participant remarked that he took after his father's family and three offered to teach the friend. Three others downplayed the talent (*na bâbâ, intor nist* 'Oh, no, it's not like that'). Five participants used *lotf dârid* 'you are kind' and two talked about the handwriting/voice courses that they took. A participant remarked that everybody gives her similar comments and one appreciated the encouragement as follows:

- a. *kheili mamnun, omidvâram mikonin, harvaght kheili nâ omid shodam miâm pisheh to.*
'Thanks very much, you make me hopeful; I'll come to you whenever I run out of hope.'

The English responses by the Persian speakers included eight translated versions of *lotf dâri* (e.g. "You are so kind to think well of me"). Three remarked that it was God's gift and two attributed the talent to a parent (e.g. "Thanks, my mother helps me this way"). Three others attributed the voice/handwriting to the courses that they had taken and two remarked that the friend's voice/handwriting was better (e.g. "but I think yours is better"). Two participants offered to teach the friend and three downplayed the talent (e.g. "Oh, really?! But I don't think so"). Two used the English expressions "Thanks a lot, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder", and "Thank you for your compliment, I'm flattered". One participant used "That's your pleasure", in an attempt to use an English formulaic expression. Among those responses that returned the compliment was the following:

- a. Thanks, but I consider that you praise me because you yourself are a successful and admirable person.

Responses such as the above, which are not uncommon in Persian conversations, reveal how a speaker may take a relatively long turn to respond to speech acts such as compliments.

Among the Australian data, there were 20 expressions of gratitude or heightened gratitude. Three somehow downplayed the talent (e.g. "Oh, it's not really, but

I'm glad you think so") and one said she did not know what the friend was talking about. Two remarked that they worked hard on it and two said they loved singing. Two others used "Do you think so?", and one wrote, "I didn't realise". The following responses intended to convey an element of humour:

- a. Do you wanna go on a date?
- b. But I'm terrible in the kitchen.

Overall, the pattern of responses to this item lends further support for the observations made previously in this section. That is, the responses by the Persian speakers either attributed the talent to God, a parent, etc. or somehow reassigned the praise to the friend who gave the compliment in the first place. Also, as in the previous items, some Australians showed a tendency to tone down the compliment while most others either made a funny remark, thus deflecting the compliment, or simply thanked the friend.

It is finally to be added that in the case of compliments, many speakers of Persian also expand a compliment situation much beyond an adjacency pair and may continue the reassignment of the compliment over several turns. This aspect of Persian communication may not be captured best by using a DCT.

9.5 Analysis of the comments

The data on the Persian speakers' compliment responses in both English and Persian are presented in a summary fashion in Table 4. It should, however, be noted that some responses could not be identified in terms of classical categories.

As can be seen, the compliment responses in Persian speakers' L1 and L2 (English) largely are informed by various aspects of the *shekasteh-nafsi* schema, including the tendency to negate or scale down compliments, downplay a talent, skill, or possession, reassign a compliment to a third party, such as parents or God, or return the compliment to the complimenter. In some cases, respondents scaled down the compliment to the extent of making an apology, which is not an uncommon strategy in Persian conversations. One aspect of the *shekasteh-nafsi* schema that was well represented in the data was returning compliments to complimenters by raising their status. Beeman (1986) refers to this phenomenon in Persian discourse as 'other-raising' and 'self-lowering'.

Participants were also given a chance to record any comments that they had about the questionnaire. The Persian participants on the whole mainly expressed their gratitude for being able to participate in the research and one thought the questions were "beautiful and psychological". One participant found the questions to be great and added that responding to the questions needed cultural

Table 4. Classification of compliment responses in Persian speakers' L1 and L2 (English)

Compliment on	Compliment response in L1	Compliment response in L2
Achievement (passing the entrance exam)	Return Reassign to complimenter and God	Return Reassign to complimenter, God, parents. Comment History
Cooking	Disagree Return Apology Reassign to mother Scale Down	Disagree Return Reassign to husband and parents Comment history
One's smart child	Return Reassign to father Scale Down	Return Reassign to a family member Scale Down Reinforce
Clothes	Return Scale Down Offer Accept	Return Scale Down Offer Accept Disagree Reassign to husband or a friend Question
Newly-built house	Return Disagree Scale Down Offer Accept History comment	Return Disagree Scale Down Offer Reassign to husband Comment History
New car	Scale Down Return Reassign to family Offer a try History comment	Scale Down Return Reassign to family Offer the car
Knowledge and intelligence	Return Scale Down Disagree	Return Scale Down Disagree Reassign to family members
Hard work	Return Accept Comment History Scale Down	Justify Accept Scale Down Qualify Question
Received prize	Reassign to mother Return	Reassign to parents and all universe. Scale Down
Good Handwriting/ voice	Return Reassign to God, teacher, father, family Apology Scale Down Offer to teach Reinforce	Return Reassign to God, parents, courses. Offer to teach Scale Down

information. Another participant appreciated the researcher's trust and one remarked that the American answer to all the English questions would simply be "thanks". The following comments were given by four Australian respondents:

- a. Many of my thank you answers were out of politeness but I did not feel comfortable saying it because I found some of the questions either patronising or somewhat condescending.
- b. I don't like compliments because I become red all the time, but I always say "thank you".
- c. I'm not a chatty person, most situations involving compliments are uneasy, I don't think Aussies are taught how to accept compliments, etc.
- d. Entertaining.

Although comments were not given by all participants, the ones that were provided, either alongside the responses or in the 'comments' section, suggest cultural as well as individual differences were functioning in their reactions to the compliments. It seems that some Anglo-Australian participants did not feel comfortable receiving the compliments that were translated from Persian, while those Persian speakers who provided comments appeared to be more positive towards the speech situations.

In conclusion, the results of the study presented in this chapter have several significant implications for cross-cultural studies of speech acts. First of all, the study reveals how pragmatic strategies that are linguistic in nature may be informed by cultural schemas that speech communities draw upon. However, the findings also suggest that the link between linguistic performance and cultural schemas is not fixed. Speakers appear to be drawing on cultural schemas dynamically, depending on context. For example, the data presented in this chapter revealed that Persian speakers were less likely to reject a compliment when it was about their performance at work. It is likely that rejecting a compliment on one's work performance may leave a negative impression on a manager.

The link between cultural schemas and pragmatic behaviour appears to be dynamic across languages as well. A speaker may draw on the cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* in their L2, but not L1. This was reflected, for example, in cases where the same speaker returned the compliment to the complimenter in L2 but accepted the compliment in L1. Thus, speakers do not seem to be 'imprisoned' in the house of their cultural conceptualisations but draw upon them in a dynamic manner. The observations in this study reveal a complex relationship between language and cultural conceptualisations that moves beyond the traditional notions of 'negative transfer' and 'pragmatic failure'.

Another significant finding of this study was the observation that a single response can serve more than one function. For example, a very frequent Persian

response when receiving compliments on a possession or the taste of the food that one has served is the formulaic expression *ghâbel-e shomâ ro nadâreh*, which literally means ‘it is not worthy of you’. This response minimises the compliment as it downplays the worth of what is being offered. However, it also returns the compliment to the complimenter by acknowledging and elevating their worth. Additionally, when the compliment is made about a possession, the Persian response is to offer the possession to the complimenter; more a gesture of politeness than a literal offer. Such cases challenge approaches that seek to ascribe one function per response.

Finally, a comparison with patterns of compliment responses from the Anglo-Australians reveals significant differences as well as some degree of overlap, mainly in terms of downplaying compliments. However, while Anglo-Australians do use the strategy of downplaying compliments, this may be attributed to the quite different cultural schemas associated with the Australian egalitarian ethos.

9.6 Concluding remarks

The chapter explicated the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* and also explored how the schema comes to be reflected in Persian speakers’ responses to compliments. Data from a group of Persian speakers largely reflected various aspects of the cultural schema, including a strong tendency to deny or downplay a talent, skill, or a possession and somehow reassigning the compliment to the person who initiated it. It was also observed that in many cases the speakers made an attempt to attribute the target of the compliment to other family members, to a friend or to God.

This study is built on the premise that linguistic strategies associated with politeness are largely rooted in cultural conceptualisations such as cultural schemas. As such, studies of politeness can provide in-depth insights into the relationship between language, culture and conceptualisations. The findings of this study, for example, suggest that Persian speaking learners of English instantiate, in varying degrees, the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* in their compliment responses. However, as mentioned above, cultural schemas may be instantiated in one’s L1, L2, or both. This observation has implications for current debates about English as an International Language (EIL), or the use of English as a tool of communication between speakers from different cultural backgrounds (e.g. McKay, 2002). Speakers of EIL are likely to instantiate their cultural conceptualisations including cultural schemas in their use of English. The orthodox observation in this context is that there is frequent miscommunication due to interlocutors’ unfamiliarity with each other’s cultural schemas.

Another important finding that emerged from the data was that the cultural schemas did not appear to be equally imprinted in the minds of the speakers. The responses were in fact reflective of various degrees of internalisation of the elements of the schemas. This observation supports the idea that cultural schemas are represented in a 'heterogeneously distributed fashion' across the minds of the members of a given cultural group.

Comparable data from a group of Australians showed a tendency towards either accepting the compliment or, to a lesser degree, downplaying it. Another characteristic feature of the Australian data was the inclusion of an element of humour or wit in the response. It is not hard to imagine situations where the above cross-cultural differences would lead to miscommunication. Drawing on the schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* by a speaker of Persian might be considered by an Australian as 'stretching the truth too far', 'over the top', or even 'sarcastic'. Speakers of Persian, on the other hand, may find Australian responses to their compliments as 'cold', 'arrogant' or 'impolite'. One could wonder to what extent such intercultural miscommunication takes place in other settings, such as the political arena.

The model of EIL calls for revised assumptions about patterns of schema-sharing in such communicative settings. That is, interlocutors should start from the assumption that English is now associated with a multitude of conceptual systems that are culturally constructed. Even single words used in English by speakers coming from different cultural backgrounds may instantiate (and evoke) different cultural conceptualisations. This conclusion/well-grounded assumption/observation calls for more studies to be carried out in order to explore the other schemas characterising different cultures and languages. The findings that result could be used as an essential part of EIL training courses and to develop what I term the metacultural competence of language learners. This competence would develop as a result of the speaker's familiarity with and a positive attitude towards various cultural systems that may be associated with the use of EIL. Undoubtedly, the overall process would enhance intercultural communication, a process by which numerous decisions are made on a daily basis about the lives and destinies of people around the globe.

In this respect, the current study is a step forward, toward a more in-depth understanding of Persian culture and language. Also, the general approach followed in this study should serve to open new horizons in the study of how cultural conceptualisations can find expression in linguistic behaviour. In the future, studies of this kind may be used to enhance what might be termed *metacultural competence* of people dealing with intercultural communication at any level and in any situation, particularly those whose decisions can affect the destiny of nations.

Appendix

English DCT for Iranian participants

Age: Gender:

You are kindly asked to fill out this questionnaire to contribute to a research project on “Language and Culture”. What you are invited to do is to imagine yourself in the following described situations and write down your most probable response to the given compliments. (Please imagine that your teacher, your colleague/classmate, and your friends (but not your mother) in the following situations are American).

1. You have recently made an impressive achievement such as passing the University Entrance Examination and you come across one of your previous teachers. He/She is so happy to hear the news and congratulates you on your success as follows:

A: Congratulations! You did a great job. Well done!!

You:

2. A family friend compliments your cooking after dinner by saying, “Your food is so delicious. You’re a fantastic cook!”

You:

3. Your friend praises your child by saying, “You have a very smart child”.

You:

4. You have bought a new dress/suit and your colleague/classmate says to you, “What a nice dress/suit! You have very good taste in clothes”.

You:

5. Your friend is visiting your newly-built house and says, “What a beautiful house!”

You:

6. You have bought a brand new car. Your friend likes your car and says to you, “You have a very nice car!”

You:

7. After reading your essay, your friend/classmate says to you, “You’re very intelligent and knowledgeable!”

You:

8. Your superior finds you very busy with your work and says to you, “You’re a real hard worker!”

You:

9. You have received a prize for your outstanding work and your mother says to you, “Congratulations! Well done!”

You:
.....

10. You have an admirable talent such as a very good handwriting or a beautiful voice and a friend says to you, “What beautiful handwriting!/what a beautiful voice!!”

You:
.....

Could you please indicate where and how long have you studied English?

If you have any comments about this questionnaire please write them either in English or in Persian below.

Many thanks for your time!

Semantic and pragmatic conceptualisations within an emerging variety

Persian English

This chapter presents a semantic-pragmatic account of Persian English, an emerging variety of English among Persian speakers, from the perspective of cultural conceptualisations. The chapter elaborates on a number of significant Persian cultural schemas, such as *âberu* and *târof*, and explores how they underlie the semantic and pragmatic aspects of certain words and expressions in Persian English, in contexts both of intercultural and intracultural communication. The study calls for similar explorations of cultural conceptualisations in other varieties of English, to provide a basis for improving people's *metacultural competence*, a competence which is needed for successful communication in those contexts in which English functions as an international language.

10.1 Introduction

Numerous books and journal articles have been published dealing with the linguistic, sociolinguistic and socio-political aspects of the spread of English worldwide. However, there is a place for approaching World Englishes from the point of view of other recent advances in the study of language, such as cognitive linguistics and cultural linguistics (Polzenhagen & Wolf, 2007). In particular, I maintain that World Englishes should be differentiated and explored in terms of the cultural conceptualisations that underpin their semantic and pragmatic levels. In an attempt to do so, this chapter explores the semantic and pragmatic aspects of an emerging variety that is being developed among Persian speakers of English, which I call 'Persian English' in terms of Persian cultural conceptualisations.

Thus far, the framework of cultural conceptualisations has mainly been used to explore two varieties of World Englishes: Australian Aboriginal English and African Englishes. As mentioned in earlier chapters in this book, research on Aboriginal English has shown that various features of this indigenised variety of English are associated with Aboriginal cultural conceptualisations. Polzenhagen

and Wolf (2007) investigate cultural conceptualisations in African English by analysing linguistic expressions from the domains of political leadership, wealth and corruption. They observe that the African cultural model of 'Community' is characterised by conceptualisations of kinship, such as *COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE KIN* and *LEADERS ARE FATHERS*. Polzenhagen and Wolf also observe that the African model of 'Leadership and Wealth' are both largely metaphorically conceptualised in terms of *EATING*. This is reflected in sentences such as *They have given him plenty to eat*, which is used in Cameroon when a new government official is appointed (see also Polzenhagen & Wolf, 2007). Against this background, the following section focuses on the case of the emerging variety of Persian English from the perspective of cultural conceptualisations.

10.2 English in Iran and the emerging variety of Persian English

There has been an unprecedented growth in the use and learning of English in Iran in the last decade. New language schools are opening across the country on a daily basis and the number of Iranians attending English classes is increasing exponentially. The motivation for this heightened interest in learning English varies from individual to individual; some pursue this as part of their attempt to travel or migrate to other countries and others have educational or occupational motivations. Still there are people who learn English due to the 'prestige' associated with it.

English is also increasingly being used on the Internet and in electronic communications, even between Persian-speaking people themselves (see for example <http://www.xzamin.com/forum/>). Several years ago the Iranian government launched a satellite transmitting three channels. Most programmes carry an English translation either in the form of subtitles or an optional dubbed voice. All of this appears to be leading to the emergence of a variety of English that I would call 'Persian English'. A thorough treatment of the linguistic structures of Persian English falls beyond the scope of this chapter, as the main aim here is to provide examples of cultural conceptualisations in this variety, as detailed in the following section.

10.3 Cultural conceptualisations in Persian English

I maintain that many lexical items and phrasal expressions in Persian English instantiate Persian cultural conceptualisations. These include everyday words from various domains such as greetings. In this section, I elaborate on this theme by providing several examples.

10.3.1 *Âberu*

Aryanpur Persian-English Dictionary (1984) defines *âberu* as “respect, credit, prestige, honour”. Some other bilingual dictionaries also give ‘reputation’ as an English equivalent of *âberu*. I maintain that *âberu* captures a complex cultural schema that overlaps with the concepts given by the bilingual dictionaries but also includes elements that are not covered by them. The closest concept to *âberu* in other cultures is that of ‘face’ (e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Hill, Ide, Kawasaki, Ikuta, & Ogino, 1986; Ide, 1989; Leech, 1983; Matsumoto, 1988; Spencer-Oatey, 2000) and in fact *âberu* literally means ‘the water of the face’ [*âb* = water, *ru* = face]. Originally, ‘face’ was a metonym for how a person as a whole would appear to others, that is, the individual’s social image. The inclusion of *âb* in the concept is associated with its connotative meanings that include ‘healthy appearance’ and ‘sweat’. In the first sense, ‘water of the face’ could be interpreted as the healthy appearance of one’s face, which is reflective of things such as wealth. In the second sense, ‘the sweat of the face’ is a metonym for cases where one is sweating due to losing face.

Âberu in contemporary Persian captures conceptualisations of the social image and status of a person and/or their family, both nuclear and extended, and their associates and friends. This social image and face is tied to a large number of social norms in relation to financial status, behaviour, both linguistic and non-linguistic, and social relationships and networks. It is hard to find something that one does or has that would not have any implications for or impact on one’s *âberu*. Due to the significance of this schema in the life of Persian speakers, the word is used very frequently (the interested reader can google ‘âberoo’ to see the number of websites that contain the word) and in many different forms of expression in conversation. The following are some examples of its usage:

- Âberu rizi kardan* (pouring *âberu*) ‘~to disgrace’
- Âberu bordan* (taking *âberu*) ‘~to disgrace’
- Âberu kharidan* (buying *âberu*) ‘~saving face’
- Âberu dâri kardan* (maintaining *âberu*) ‘~maintaining face’
- Bi âberu* (without *âberu*) ‘~disgraced’
- Âberu-dâr* (*âberu*-poss) ‘~respectable, decent’

As a Westerner who has lived in Iran, O’Shea (2000: 101) maintains that for Iranians “*Aberu*, or honour, is a powerful social force. All Iranians measure themselves to a great extent by the honour they accumulate through their actions and social interrelations”. This accumulated *âberu*, or the lack of it, determines who one would expect to marry, the kind of career one is expected to pursue, and in general what sorts of behaviour is expected from a person from a particular family background. In a sense, a family’s *âberu* acts as a pointer for social classification and stratification.

The cultural schema of *âberu* is expressed through words such as ‘honour’, ‘reputation’, ‘pride’ and ‘dignity’ in Persian English. The following examples written by Persian speaking expatriates are from various webpages:

I think the problem is more giving too much value to your social picture. We have even an important word for it in Farsi, *Aberoo*, that I don’t know of a good English equivalent for it. So maybe we should pay less attention about how people think about us, and try to be the way, that we would like ourselves to be. Back in Iran, I was always frustrated by arguments like “We should not do this, since our “*Aberoo*” would be compromised”.¹⁵

Some of us eyeranians [Iranians] have this weird concept of *Aberoo* or honor of our outside persona we try to protect so dearly at any cost.¹⁶

Thank you for your valuable insights. First of all: The Nuclear Energy issue is a matter of national pride for each and every Iranian. If Iran stops now it will be a shame for the entire country. In Persian there is a saying “*Aberoo e ma miree*”. It means our dignity and respect will be gone.¹⁷

It is clear from the first two quotes above that some Iranians have developed a conscious awareness of, and some have even developed a negative attitude towards, this cultural schema. This is more common among the Persian speakers who live outside Iran and is likely to be a consequence of exposure to cultures in which ‘face’ does not play a significant role in people’s lives.

As mentioned above, Persian English is also increasingly being used among Persian speakers to communicate with each other, partly due to its convenience, and English being the main language of the Internet. In cases of intra-cultural communication, the word *âberu* is often used without an attempt to render it in English, such as in the following cases:

good idea, we only have our *aberoo* left in that game and putting in the subs is a good way to blow it and become the Saudi Arabias of 06.¹⁸

Many important concepts in our culture, one’s *ABEROO*, for example, is placed above almost anything else.¹⁹

15. http://freethoughts.org/cgi-bin/mt-comments.cgi?entry_id=594

16. <http://www.eyeranian.net/?p=992>

17. <http://muslimunity.blogspot.com/2006/03/impact-of-sanctions-on-iran.html>

18. <http://www.irankicks.com/ikboard/showthread.php?t=40631&goto=nextoldest>

19. <http://freethoughts.org/archives/000318.php>

Please tell Reza that I hope some other Reza will be found to do some “*Aberoo Rizi*” for his Concert. Exactly the same as what he did for “AmAn”’s one.²⁰

While clearly showing that English is now being used for intra-cultural communication between speakers of Persian, these examples also suggest that the speakers are aware of the lack of an exact equivalence for the concept of *âberu* in English but fully recognise its importance in Persian culture.

10.3.2 *Târof*

Several authors have noted the significance of the notion of *târof* in Persian, as a communicative strategy (Asdjodi, 2001; Assadi, 1980; Eslami Rasekh, 2005; Hillmann, 1981; Hodge, 1957; Koutlaki, 2002). *Târof* is a cultural schema that underlies a significant part of everyday social interactions in Persian. Its realisation in conversations may be in the form of ‘ostensible’ invitations, repeated rejection of offers, insisting on making offers, hesitation in making requests, giving frequent compliments, hesitation in making complaints, etc. Often, all the parties involved in a single conversation can make use of a combination of these realisations, in varying degrees. It is often not easy to tease out genuine attempts from *târof*, and that is why speakers constantly ask each other not to engage in *târof*, in order to find out if the communicative act is a genuine one. The following excerpt, from the author’s personal data, reveals the instantiation of this cultural schema in Persian conversations:

- (9) L: *Miveh befarmâyin*
Fruit eat:polite.form
‘Please have some fruit.’
S: *Merci sarf shodeh*
thanks I have.had
‘Thanks, I have had some.’
L: *Khâhesh mikonam befarmâyin, ghâbel-e shomâ*
beg I do eat:polite.form worthy-of you
ro nadâreh
DO marker it.is.not
‘Please have some, they are not worthy of you.’
S: *Sâhâbesh ghâbel-e, dast-e-toon dard nakoneh,*
its.owner worthy-is hand-of-your pain doesn’t
‘You are worthy, thanks.’

20. <http://www.haloscan.com/comments/nazlik/111660745918695958/>

- L: *Torokhodâ befarmâyin, namak nadâreh*
 for.God's.sake eat:polite.form salt doesn't.have²¹
 'For God's sake please have some, it has no salt.'
- S: *Târof nemikon-am, tâzeh shâm khord-im*
 târof don't-I just dinner had-we
 'I don't do târof, we just had dinner.'
- L: *Ye dooneh portaghâl be oonjâhâ nemikhoreh*
 one orange is not too much
 'One orange wouldn't be that much.'
- S: *Chashm, dast-e-toon o kootâh nemikon-am*
 okay hand-of-your DO marker short will.not-I
 'Okay, I won't turn down your offer.'

The general aim of the cultural schema of *târof* is to create a form of social space for speakers to exercise face work and also to provide communicative tools to negotiate and lubricate social relationships. It also affords a chance for interlocutors to construct certain identities and images of themselves, for example, to portray themselves as very hospitable. Persian-speaking society traditionally revolves around social relations. Almost all forms of social institution in Iran, from marriage to employment and business, hinge upon social relations. Usually a person's ability to exercise and respond to *târof* appropriately has a significant bearing on their social relationships. Beeman (1986) compares personal relations in Iran to an art that requires sophisticated verbal skills.

Several authors have noted the absence of the Persian concept of *târof* in English and have used various labels to describe it, including 'ritual courtesy' (Beeman, 1986: 56), 'communicative routine' (Koutlaki, 2002: 1741), 'ritual politeness' (Koutlaki, 2002: 1740), and 'polite verbal wrestling' (Rafiee, 1992: 96). Koutlaki observes that *târof* "is a very complex concept, carrying different meanings in the minds of native speakers [of Persian] and baffling anyone endeavouring to describe it". Beeman (1986: 196) maintains that "*târof* is the active, ritualised realisation of differential perceptions of superiority and inferiority in interaction. It underscores and preserves the integrity of culturally defined roles as they are carried out in the life of every Iranian, every day, in thousands of different ways". Some non-Iranian writers have naively described *târof* as 'insincerity' or even 'hypocrisy'. For example, de Bellaigue (2004: 14) states that "[y]ou should know about *ta'aruf*. In Arabic *ta'aruf* means behaviour that is appropriate

21. This expression is associated with a traditional cultural belief that if you eat something that contains salt you will be indebted to the person who gave the food/fruit to you.

and customary; in Iran, it has been corrupted and denotes ceremonial insincerity. Not in a pejorative sense; Iran is the only country I know where hypocrisy is prized as a social and commercial skill”.

The root of the cultural schema of *târof* dates back to Pre-Islamic Persia, especially to the teachings of Prophet Zartosht (Zarathushtra) (Asdjodi, 2001; Beeman, 1986), although the word itself is Arabic in origin. The core principles of Zoroastrian religion are ‘good words’, ‘good thoughts’ and ‘good deeds’, known in English as the three Gs. The use of kind words in Zoroastrian religion is not merely a virtue but a kind of prayer.²² It is also a pivotal part of one’s identity as a Zoroastrian. It should also be emphasised that this use of kind words is not just a matter of verbal display but should be backed by good thoughts and that is why I refer to the whole system as a cultural schema rather than just a set of linguistic strategies. In other words, *târof* is a conceptual system, which feeds not only into speech but also behaviour, as ‘good deeds’. O’Shea (2000: 122) observes that *târof* in Persian has both physical and verbal manifestations. She notes that “the former consist of activities such as jostling to be the last through the door, seeking a humble seating location, or standing to attention on the arrival or departure of other guests”. Assadi (1980: 221) also observes that “*Tâ’arof* is a generic term which denotes a myriad of verbal and *non-verbal* deferential behaviours in Persian” [emphasis added].

Two websites have discussed *târof* metaphorically in terms of ‘war’, ‘dance’ and ‘game’. Taghavi²³ likens *târof* to war due to the repeated exchanges that take place between interlocutors, during which they constantly make offers, reject offers, make compliments, etc. The Persian Mirror webpage²⁴ views *târof* as “a verbal dance between an offerer and an acceptor until one of them agrees”. On the same webpage *târof* is considered as an art that “in the end becomes a ritual or a game that both participants are aware of playing”.

Since the Inner-Circle varieties of English (e.g. American English and British English) do not have an identical cultural schema for *târof*, speakers of Persian English may use words such as ‘compliment’ or ‘courtesy’ to refer to it. They may also use the original Persian word in their English for intra-cultural communication with other speakers of Persian. A glance at some Persian online chat rooms revealed examples such as the following:

22. <http://www3.sympatico.ca/zoroastrian/Avesta.htm>

23. <http://www.iranian.com/HamidTaghavi/Oct98/Tarof/index.html>

24. <http://www.persianmirror.com/culture/distinct/distinct.cfm#art>

- a. What do you do that is very Persian?
- b. Me... I *tarof* a lot
- c. I always like watching americans accept the offer and the immediate look of slight shock on the Iranians face before recomposing themselves. Hahaha²⁵

Interestingly, the website of the Iranian Singles Network (<http://www.iraniansingles.com/>) has a section under every person's profile with the title 'having etiquette/*tarof kardan*', where the members need to specify the extent to which they like or exercise *târof*. As can be seen, *târof* here is translated as 'etiquette'. Other words that may be used in Persian English to capture the concept of *târof* are 'formal' and 'formality'. Consider the following example from a movie which was broadcast on Jam-e-Jam Satellite Channel:

(Speaker A is talking to speaker B at the door of B's house)

A: *Biâ too* (meaning 'Come in')

Subtitle: 'Come in'

B: *Mozâhem nemisham* (meaning 'I won't bother you')

Subtitle: 'I won't trouble you'

A: *Târof nakon* (meaning 'don't do *târof*')

Subtitle: 'Stop being formal'

B: *Na jooneh to, bâ yad beram* (meaning 'no, really I have to go')

Subtitle: 'Thanks, I have to go'

In light of the observations made so far in this chapter about *târof* it is clear that it is not intrinsically a display of formality. In fact the above exchange does not reflect a formal conversation. Both speakers are using singular forms to address each other, which is one characteristic of a familiar style. If the conversation had been formal, they would have used plural forms: *biâyin* 'come:PL' instead of *biâ* 'come:SG', *nakonin* 'don't.do:PL' instead of *nakon* 'don't.do:SG', and *shomâ* 'you:PL' instead of *to* 'you:SG'.

10.3.3 *Shakhsiat*

Târof is closely tied to the concept of *shakhsiat*, which has been translated into English variously as 'character', 'personality', 'pride' (Koutlaki, 2002), and 'integrity' (Eslami Rasekh, 2005). Koutlaki (2002:1742) observes that *shakhsiat* "is a complex concept which could be rendered as 'personality', 'character', 'honour', 'self-respect', 'social standing'". She relates *shakhsiat* to politeness and the expected codes of behaviour, in the sense that those who observe 'politeness' are considered

25. <http://www.xzamin.com/forum/read.php?forumid=4619&forumind=forum>

to have *shakhsiat*. Thus, it is conceptualised as an attribute that one can develop to various degrees, depending on variables such as family background, level of education, etc. *Shakhsiat* is at least partly tied to *târof* in the sense that one's ability to exercise appropriate *târof* is an indication of heightened *shakhsiat*.

An important point about the concept of *shakhsiat* is that it is a multifaceted notion and a polysemous word. It can refer to one's character if used in contexts such as (10) below:

- (10) *Shakhsiat-e ajib o gharibi dâreh.*
 personality-a strange and peculiar has-he/she
 'He/She has a strange personality.'

However, it is predominantly a concept that is defined in relation to the way one's outward, including verbal, behaviour is perceived by society. Unlike *âberu*, which is very much tied to social stratification and social groupings such as family status in the Iranian society, *shakhshiat* is primarily construed as the result of an individual's concerted efforts at constructing a socially acceptable image of *shakhs* 'person' in the eyes of others. It is, however, a dynamic concept in the sense that people can gain or lose *shakhshiat*, for example, by not exercising appropriate *târof*.

Concepts such as 'character' and 'personality', and more so 'individuality', which are often viewed as the equivalent of *shakhsiat*, primarily capture the qualities that make up a person as an individual rather than a member of a social group. Koutlaki (2002: 1743) recognises that giving *shakhsiat* "to an addressee has to do with society's injunctions about paying face, and also with group face wants". As it can be seen in the quote, *shakhsiat* is conceptualised as something that a speaker can give to an addressee, for example, by somehow saving their face in communication. Koutlaki compares *shakhsiat* to Brown and Levinson's notion of 'positive face' and observes that, although the two notions are similar, there are important differences. As indicated above, *shakhsiat* is a person's concern with societal face whereas 'positive face' reflects "a person's individual want to be desired, respected, and liked, and to have her wants shared by others" (Koutlaki, 2002: 1743). It may be said that in English, your 'personality' is defined by what you do when no one is watching you, but your *shakhsiat*, is the result of what you do and say when people are watching you.

In Persian English, the cultural schema of *shakhsiat* is usually instantiated through the use of words such as 'with/without character or high/low character' (for *bi/bâ shakhsiat*), 'honour' (for giving *shakhsiat*). Someone who is *bâ shakhsiat* 'with *shakhsiat*' is often referred to as 'gentle' or 'polite'. However, it should now be clear that the conceptualisations that are associated with such words in Persian English may not be exactly the same as those which characterise other varieties of English.

The cultural schema of *târof* also underlies the ways in which words such as *zahmat* ‘trouble’ are interpreted. The cultural schema profiles a request or a favour in terms of what must be gone through by the person who fulfils the request rather than the speech act initiated by the person who makes the request. Consider the following example.

- (11) *Yek zahmat barât dâr-am, misheh in nâmaro*
 One trouble for.you have-I is.it.possible this letter
barâm post koni?
 for.me post do-you
 ‘I have a request, could you post this letter for me?’

Here, the act of posting a letter may be construed in different ways depending on whether it is the intention of the speaker that is highlighted, or the effect that it will have on the hearer. In cases such as the above, if it is the intention of the speaker which is highlighted, then the act is construed as a ‘request’, but if its effect, or potential effect, on the hearer is foregrounded, then it may be construed as ‘trouble’. In Persian, most often the latter holds, that is, speakers construe their requests and whatever has been done for them as *zahmat*, ‘trouble’, for the person addressed. Note that sentence (11) could have been formulated as *yek taghâzâ azat dâram* ‘I have a request for you’, rather than *yek zahmat barât dâram* ‘I have a trouble for you’, but this option is rarely used in Persian. The following examples (12)–(14) reveal other contexts in which a service, a favour, is construed as ‘*zahmat*’:

- (12) (An excerpt from a leave-taking conversation between a visitor and the host)
 a. *Bebakhshin zahmat dâd-im*
 Forgive (us) trouble gave-we
 ‘Sorry for giving you the trouble.’
 b. *Khâhesh mikonam, khooneyeh khodetoon-e*
 Please house yours-is
 ‘Please, it is your house.’
- (13) *Merci bâbateh zahmat-i ke keshid-i, lebâsa-m*
 Thanks for trouble-the that went.through-you dress-mine
o otoo kard-i
 DO marker iron did-you
 ‘Thanks for ironing my dress.’
- (14) *Zahmat bekesh yek châyî barâm biâr*
 trouble take one tea for.me bring-you
 ‘Please bring me a cup of tea.’

In Persian English, the use of the word ‘trouble’, in the above sense, is very common in the context of requests, services and favours. It is also frequently used to express gratitude. A statement such as ‘sorry to give you the trouble’ is not so much an act of apology, but an expression of gratitude. Other words that may be used in such circumstances are ‘bother’ and ‘inconvenience’. Thus, again, ‘so sorry to bother you’ and ‘so sorry for the inconvenience’ may be simple acts of thanking a person for favours such as making someone a cup of tea. They could also be used as a way of ending a telephone conversation, to foreground and acknowledge the time that the hearer has spent talking to the speaker on the phone.

10.4 Greeting in Persian English

Greeting in Persian English often follows the patterns of greeting in Persian. In Persian, greetings usually go far beyond the act of acknowledging the other person. The phrases that are used to refer to greeting in Persian include *salâm va ahvâlpori* ‘greeting and asking about health’²⁶ and *sâlam va adab* ‘greeting and expressing politeness’, and *salâm o târof*. This is due to the fact that the Persian cultural schema of greeting overlaps with other schemas such as *adab* and *târof*. The schema usually encourages enacting several, often repeated, communicative acts that reveal the speaker’s care about not only the interlocutor but also his/her extended family (see Beeman, 1986: 181; Taleghani-Nikazm, 2002: 1811). In viewing *târof* as the Iranian style of war, Taghavi²⁷ observes that in Persian conversations “greetings start with the inevitable exchange of an array of compliments and the ensuing battle to convince the other party of their relative high status. This is similar to diplomatic efforts preceding a war”. O’Shea (2000: 79) observes that “[g]reetings take up a lot of time in Iran. Not only does one usually inquire about someone’s health, but also about the health of any of that person’s friends and relatives with whom one is acquainted.” The author notes that in a language school in Iran, some teachers made the following exchange part of every greeting they made:

Speaker A: How’s your folks?

Speaker B’s response: Everyone says hello to you.

26. It should be noted that the translations that I have provided are only approximations to the Persian equivalent. The author is aware that in light of the discussion presented in this book, the Persian expressions and the translations provided are likely to be associated with at least slightly different conceptualisations.

27. <http://www.iranian.com/HamidTaghavi/Oct98/Tarof/index.html>

A very frequent part of greeting in Persian is sending greetings to family members, even if the speaker does not know the interlocutor's family. Often, the speaker just says *salâm beresoonid* 'give my regards'.

The Persian cultural schema of *salâm o ahvâlpori* also involves 'ostensible' invitations. Eslami Rasekh (2005: 473) observes that in Persian culture, ostensible invitations "are primarily used as opening or closing telephone conversations or in face-to-face encounters, which may function as a leave-taking act and an expression of good will on the part of the inviter". She notes that "by using invitation in leave-taking, the host not only shows respect (*ehterâm*) to the guest, but also enhances his/her own face by offering hospitality". Eslami Rasekh rightly argues that such invitations are manifestations of *târof*, discussed above. She maintains that "offering such invitations are (sic) part of the art of knowing how to make *taârof* (ritual politeness), in order to be *bâ šæxsiat* (polite) and not to incur bad reputation: that is, to live up to the society's expectations" (2005: 479).

The fact that such aspects of the Persian cultural schema of greeting may surface in Persian English is reflected in Eslami Rasekh's (2005: 453) remark on her own experience that

[o]ver the years of my intercultural experiences in the United States and observation of other Iranian/American interactions, I have witnessed that Iranians sometimes take Americans' genuine invitations as ostensible (not to be taken seriously) and therefore reject them, while Americans may take Iranian ostensible invitations as genuine and accept them.

This is of course not to imply that all invitations that are offered as part of greeting and leave taking among Persian speakers are ostensible. Usually the sincerity of invitations hinges upon how far the invitation is extended in the exchange, who is inviting whom, and in what context.

10.5 Terms of address

Persian has a rather elaborate system of honorifics and address terms which are largely associated with cultural conceptualisations that speakers of Persian learn as part of their socialisation into the language (Keshavarz, 2001). For example, the concepts of *âghâ* and *khânôm*, which are usually rendered as *Mr* and *Mrs* in Persian English, are associated with a cultural schema that not only encodes gender but also expresses a certain degree of respect. Thus, a speaker of Persian English may use *Mr X* or *Mrs X* to express some form of respect, and not just to highlight the person's gender. In the above frame, X could be a person's first name or surname. The latter involves a higher degree of formality and distance between the addressor

and the addressee. If a person has a title such as Doctor, the formal form of address for him/her would then be *âghâye*h or *khânomeh Doctor (surname)*, which may be expressed in Persian English as *Mr/Mrs Dr (surname)*. It should be mentioned that the surname is often dropped in conversations. This is reflected in Persian English sentences such as (15), which was part of an email to the author.

(15) Hello Mr Dr.

10.6 Conceptualisations of emotions in Persian English

A major part of human life is the experience of emotions. However, the ways in which people conceptualise their emotional experience and the ways in which they express their emotions may vary across different cultures (e.g. Wierzbicka, 1999). For example, people across different languages and cultures may attribute their emotional experience to different body parts; for some the heart is the seat of emotions, for others it is the liver, the belly or even the throat (see Sharifian, Dirven, Yu, & Niemeier, 2008). Moreover, different cultures may attach different meanings to emotional experiences of different kinds and may also value and express emotions differently.

As for the case of conceptualisations of emotions in Persian English, it appears that there are similarities with and differences from other varieties of English. Inner-Circle varieties of English abound with expressions that reflect the heart as the seat of emotions (e.g. *she broke my heart*). Persian also has many expressions that reflect a similar conceptualisation, such as *delbâkhtan* (lit. 'losing heart') 'falling in love'. However, there are differences in terms of what the heart signifies in particular expressions. For example, in Persian *del* (fig. 'heart', lit. 'stomach') is also the seat of courage, as in *deldâr* (lit. *del*+possess) 'brave', contrasting with Inner-Circle varieties of English where courage is mainly associated with 'guts'. This is explored in more detail in Chapter 11.

A significant emotional experience for Persian speakers is 'grief', which has an important symbolic place in the religious and everyday life of many Iranians (see also de Bellaigue, 2004). Many religious and cultural ceremonies provide an opportunity for Iranians to discharge their 'grief' in a space where this emotional experience is construed as positive, as a sign of piety, loyalty, etc. Reflecting on the concept of dysphoria – etymologically the opposite of euphoria – in Iranian culture, Good and Delvecchio Good (1988: 46) observe that

"Sadness and grief" – *gham o ghoseh* – pose special problems of understanding for the psychological anthropologists or for the student of Iranian society and culture. They have dramatically different meanings and forms of expression in Iranian

culture than in our own. A rich vocabulary of Persian and Azeri terms of grief and sadness translate uneasily into English language and American culture. “Dysphoria” in Iranian culture is hardly the lack of happiness or pleasure of the individual, to be overcome by therapy or medical treatment – though it may be the focus of both. It is rather a core effect – the central emotion of religious ritual, an important element of the definition of selfhood, a key quality of a developed and profound understanding of the social order, and most recently a symbol of political loyalty.

Part of the complexity of *gham o ghoseh* comes from the dual role that it has for Iranians. On the one hand, it has religious significance. On the other, it is conceptualised in the everyday non-religious experiences of Iranian people, and the two influence each other in dynamic ways. In everyday experiences, *gham o ghoseh* captures a whole range of emotional states that one goes through from being hurt by what someone else has said, to being away from relatives or even having financial difficulties. Very frequently people exchange these emotional experiences during speech events that are known as *dard-e del* (lit. ‘pain of the heart’), which provide people with emotional spaces where they can find relief in communicating their *gham o ghoseh*. In this sense, it is a virtue to listen to and share others’ *gham o ghoseh*. The person who does this is referred to as *gham-khâr* (lit. ‘gham eater’). A mother may refer to her caring daughter as *ghamkhâr*.

Conceptually, *gham o ghoseh* does not refer to a state of being, as sadness does, but rather to a ‘thing’ that one can have, or throw away. The verb for *gham o ghoseh* is *ghoseh khordan* (lit. ‘to eat *ghoseh*’) ‘to grieve’, which reflects the conceptualisation of grief as an entity. Although a full treatment of this complicated emotional experience falls beyond the scope of this chapter, it should be clear that the emotional experiences expressed as sorrow, grief and sadness in Persian English may not exactly match what is captured by the use of these words in other varieties of English. Beeman (1988: 20) realises this when he makes the followings remarks:

I am hampered in my own description of emotional expression in Iranian society by lack of terms sufficiently neutral to avoid the overtones that adhere to English words for expressing emotions. *Affection, anger, sadness, disappointment*, etc. are all words that carry a cultural load, but they are all we have at present.

As Behzadi (1994) puts it, “emotionally based cultural practices are an ecologically meaningful domain to study how people make sense of their emotional life events, the meanings of these emotional experiences, and how they are expressed”. He notes the use of two culture-specific emotion terms in Persian *ghahr* (not to be on speaking terms with someone) and *âshti* (to make up) and observes that they “represent a complex culture-specific fusion of emotional dynamics, cognitive evaluations, and behavioural tendencies, which both codes negative and ‘distancing’ emotions and initiates a set of social actions and gestures that lead

to amelioration of that emotional state” (Behzadi, 1994:321). These terms are very frequent in conversations among Persian speakers and are associated with their affectionate interpersonal relationships. Often, when one’s expectations in relation to interpersonal relationships with someone else are not met, the person enters the state of *ghahr*, which involves avoidance and distancing between the parties involved. *Âshti* is when this state of affairs ends and the two make up and reconcile, often with someone acting as a mediator.

Behzadi (1994: 322) notes the difficulty in translating *ghahr* and *âshti* into English and maintains that “[t]he difficulty is not limited to the absence of synonyms in the English lexicon; it is rooted in the cultural meaning of the terms, the associated behaviours, the culturally appropriate sequence of actions, the rituals and ceremonies involved, and their implications for the self and others”. English subtitles that are used in Persian movies mostly translate *ghahr* as ‘sulk’, as in the following examples:

Mina ghahr kard o raft ‘lit. Mina *ghahr* did and left’

Subtitle: Mina sulked and left.

To nabâyad ghahr mikardi ‘lit. you shouldn’t have done *ghahr*’

Subtitle: You shouldn’t have sulked.

This usage appears to be very prevalent and these two notions often constitute major themes in Persian movies and in Persian literature.

10.7 Concluding remarks

The analyses presented in this chapter provide further evidence that different varieties of English express and embody the cultural conceptualisations of their speakers. They also reveal how speakers may struggle to find accurate equivalents in English for these conceptualisations. In traditional SLA paradigms, some of the features that I have analysed in this chapter would be identified as ‘negative transfer’, a term that depends for its force on taking a so-called ‘native’ variety as a norm. However, I argue that first of all, the norms of Persian English should be examined in the light of Persian cultural conceptualisations not in terms of the cultural conceptualisations that are embodied in and transmitted by another variety such as American English. For many speakers, the use of these features and communicative strategies is tied to their cultural and psychological interiority and they may find it hard not to express cultural conceptualisations that they have internalised and therefore have formed part of their *cultural cognition* throughout their lives. It would be naïve to expect such a speaker to become culturally and emotionally a totally different person with a different character when speaking a

second language. Of course learning a second language in many cases expands the speaker's horizon towards new cultural, social and cognitive experiences. Yet expecting learners to abandon old and adopt totally new sets of norms for their cultural and emotional experiences would in many cases be unreasonable, unfeasible and therefore unrealistic.

Further, many speakers who share or speak culturally overlapping 'non-native' varieties will find that they hold similar conceptualisations and therefore find the expression of their cultural conceptualisations when communicating in English, completely appropriate (that is transparent) during intercultural/international communication. In fact, it would not be hard to imagine situations where, for example, speakers of Persian English would offend speakers of a variety such as Pakistani English by following the norms of a so-called 'native' variety such as American English. And more importantly, keeping in mind that more than 80% of communication in English is now taking place between non-native speakers of the language, it is high time to conduct further research on the cultural conceptualisations that these speakers draw on to negotiate their acts of intercultural communication. The findings of such studies would then need to be incorporated into the ELT materials used for awareness-raising and to develop learners' *metacultural competence*, an absolute requirement for successful and effective international communication. But, of course, what needs to come first is attitude change among educators and learners about whose norms to follow in international/intercultural communication in English. In short, the 'colonial' assumptions that have been dominant in the traditional second language acquisition (SLA) paradigm should be abandoned.

This chapter has made another case for the study of World Englishes from the perspective of cultural conceptualisations by providing examples from the variety of English that is emerging among speakers of Persian. It shows that the analytical notions that I have covered by the term 'cultural conceptualisations', such as 'cultural schema', provide helpful tools for understanding culturally constructed levels of semantic and pragmatic meaning in World Englishes. The nature of the examples that have been chosen for investigation in this chapter suggests a methodological approach: researchers could begin to systematically construct comparative cultural maps showing how deeply rooted cultural concepts, which have no equivalent in Inner Circle varieties, are nevertheless instantiated in English, if only through borrowings. I hope this study also sets another precedent for similar explorations of cultural conceptualisations in other varieties of English elsewhere in the world. Finally, it is acknowledged that a thorough investigation of the emerging variety of Persian English requires much more systematic collection and description of data. However, the data presented in this chapter should suffice to support the argument made about the strength and the necessity of the study of World English from the perspective of cultural conceptualisations.

PART V

Culture, body, self and language

Cultural conceptualisations of ‘Self’ and *del* ‘heart/stomach’ in Persian

This chapter explores cultural conceptualisations of the ‘self’ in Persian. An examination of the Sufi (a mystical school of thought within Islam) spiritual path, and in particular the notion of *nafs* ‘self’ and its closely associated notion *del* ‘spiritual heart’, reveals striking similarities with the ways in which ‘self’ is conceptualised in modern Persian. For example, in Sufi the spiritual path, *nafs* is considered to be the ‘cardinal self’ which is the source of earthly desires and passions. The Sufi’s mission in his journey towards perfection and unity with God is to battle this ‘self’ and its egoistic tendencies. Similarly, in contemporary usage, *nafs* is associated with egocentric traits. Thus, it would be virtuous for people to ‘break’ their *nafs* by distancing themselves from pride, for example. This usually takes the form of undermining one’s self, by rejecting compliments, for instance, a practice which is referred to as *shekasteh-nafsi* ‘broken-self’. Several of the conceptualisations of the word *del* in Persian also appear to be consonant with those of the notions of *nafs* and *del* in Sufism. This appears to be due to the overwhelming influence of Sufism on Persian literature, and poetry in particular. A great deal of Sufi poetry is written in Persian. In order to present these as an example of the role of language as a ‘memory bank’ for cultural conceptualisations, this chapter presents a close account of the development of and the spread of conceptualisations of ‘self’ from Sufism to the Persian language and literature in general.

11.1 Introduction

In the quest for self knowledge, some scholars have explored the body, others have focused on non-bodily dimensions, yet others on the link between the two, that is, the link between the bodily and non-bodily dimensions of human existence. These inquiries have necessitated the development of rather abstract notions such as ‘mind’, ‘psyche’ and ‘self’, which are often conceptualised in some form of relationship with the human body. Such conceptualisations are, however, far from being universal and are largely culturally constructed (e.g. Kövecses, 2005; Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, et al., 2008). Languages serve as ‘memory banks’ for such cultural

conceptualisations, both past and present, and, as such, provide intriguing archives for the study of cultural conceptualisations associated with them.

An understanding of the cultural differences in conceptualising 'self' appears to be pivotal to grasping other culturally differentiated dimensions of human experience such as emotions, sense of the worth of oneself and others, and politeness (e.g. Ruhi & Isik-Guler, 2007). This view is confirmed by the observations made in this chapter, whose central finding is that the ways in which 'self' is conceptualised in modern Persian, in particular with the concepts of *nafs* 'self' and *del* 'spiritual heart', appear consonant with conceptualisations of the Sufi spiritual path/journey.

An examination of Persian literature reveals that Sufi mystic poets and scholars employed Sufi conceptualisations of *nafs* and *del* in their writings and poems. It seems that Persian literature, particularly Sufi literature, has served as a vehicle for the transmission of the conceptualisations of *nafs* and *del* into the Persian language as it is spoken today. Given that Sufi literature has been part of a living tradition for more than 800 years, its frequent quotation in daily life has reinforced the conceptualisations of *nafs* and *del* among Persian speakers.

Beginning with a brief introduction to lexical items associated with 'self' in Persian, the next part of the chapter explores the Sufi conceptualisations of 'self' in the context of Sufi path towards perfection and unity with God. Later sections trace the development of Sufi conceptualisations of *nafs* and *del* in Persian literature and language.

11.2 'Self' in Persian

In Persian, concepts associated with 'self' are mainly expressed by the words *khod*, a native Persian word, and *nafs*, a borrowing from Arabic. The word *khod* may be used as a free morpheme or can be part of a compound. In many cases *khod* serves as a reflexive pronoun, such as in the following cases:

- (16) *Khod-e ou beh man goft.*
Self-EZ he/she to me said.
'S/He herself/himself told me.'
- (17) *Ou khod-ash beh man goft*
He/she self-him/her to me told
'He/she himself/herself told me.'
- (18) *man khod-am oon ro did-am.*
I self-my it/he/she DO marker saw-me.
'I myself saw it/him/her.'

It can be seen that in (16) *khod* comes before a subject pronoun and acts as a reflexive pronoun, and in (17) and (18) *khod* forms part of the reflexive pronoun that follows the subject pronoun. *Khod* may also be used as a morpheme in constructions such as the following:

Khod-been 'khod+see' (conceited)
Khod-parast 'khod+worship' (selfish, egoist)
Khod-pasand 'khod+choose' (self-admiring)
Khod-khâh 'khod+desire' (egoist, self-centered)
Khod-dâr 'khod+have' (reserved, secretive)
Khod-ra'i 'khod+opinion' (obstinate)
Khod-sâkhteh 'khod+built' (self-made)
Khod-sar 'khod+head' (opinionated)
Khod-kâmeh 'khod+desire' (self-centered)
Khod-mokhtâr 'khod+govern' (self-governed, autonomous)
Khod-namâ 'khod+show' (showy)

In the above constructions, *khod* mainly refers to 'personhood' and foregrounds the individuality and individual-ness of the person asserted, in most cases, at the expense of others. I will return to a discussion of this concept later in the chapter. The other concept associated with 'self' in Persian is *nafs*, a morpheme that usually forms part of a compound, such as in the following:

Etemâd beh nafs 'trust to 'self'' (self confidence)
Ezat-e nafs 'esteem/respect-of 'self'' (self-esteem)
Shekasteh-nafs-i 'broken-self-PROCESS' (modesty)

The above compounds may be used as in the following sentences:

- (19) *etemâd-beh-nafs-am kam shodeh*
 Self-confidence-mine less has.become
 'My self-confidence has diminished.'
- (20) *ezateh-nafs beh ensân shahâmat mideh*
 Self-esteem to human being courage gives
 'Self-esteem gives human beings courage.'
- (21) *shekasteh-nafs-i mifarmâ-yin*
 Modest exercise-you
 'You are being modest.'

The word *nafs* in (19) and (20) appears in compounds that signify psychological traits but in (21) it is mainly associated with politeness, a point that will be discussed later in the chapter. The concept of *nafs*, however, occupies a very significant place in the history of Iranian spirituality, particularly in (Persian) Sufism.

11.3 *Nafs* 'self' in Sufism

According to Nurbakhsh (an influential Iranian Sufi scholar) (1992), *nafs* is a stage a Sufi passes through towards perfection and finding God in himself. He maintains that

[f]rom the Sufi point of view, material nature (*tab'*), the self (*nafs*), heart (*del*), spirit (*ruh*), the inner consciousness (*serr or khafi*), and the innermost consciousness (*serr-e serr or akhfâ*) constitute the stages of advancement through which the human psyche passes on its journey towards perfection.

(Nurbakhsh, 1992: 1)

Material nature is inherited at birth, and has a significant influence on the development of *nafs*, which takes place as a result of interaction with the natural and cultural environment, and during the process of socialisation within the context of family, school, etc. *Nafs* has egoistic tendencies, such as pride, jealousy, and greed, and is viewed as the source of the impulse to do ill. Some attributes of *nafs* include the following:

nafs is ignorant.

nafs is an idol.

nafs finds peace only in deceit.

Latent idolatry is one the hardest dictates of the *nafs*.

nafs stands accused of evils of all kinds.

nafs always desires that which is prohibited.

nafs is a slave to the passions.

nafs is a hypocrite, a pretender, and an idolater.

nafs is arrogant and egocentric.

nafs likes to be complemented and praised by others.

nafs changes its colour every moment.

nafs is greedy.

(Source: Nurbakhsh, 1992: 12–19)

Some scholars have translated *nafs* as the 'lower self' in English. Molavi (known as Rumi to Westerners) has been quoted to have metaphorically referred to *nafs* as 'dog', as follows:

I thought that if I put the chain of repentance around the neck of the dog of the *nafs*, if I make him old that way, maybe I could eliminate his rebellion. But whenever he sees a decaying corpse, he breaks the chain and runs for the corpse. I do not know how I am going to deal with this dog of the *nafs*. I do not know what I should do to this dog of the *nafs*.

(Rumi, cited in Can, 2005: 176)

Against *nafs* there is *aghl* 'reason', which can defeat *nafs* by combating bodily and 'earthly' desires, as will be discussed later in this chapter. This battle with *nafs* is viewed as 'the greatest jihad' and the hardship that one experiences during the purification of the self is called *riâzat* 'mortification'. Some Sufis have identified *nafs* with Satan. Some others view Satan and *nafs* to be similar, in that they are both egocentric, but not identical.

It should be added here that many Sufi masters view *nafs* as having different stages and levels. Nurbakhsh (1992: 51) refers to four levels: *nafs-e ammâra* (the commanding *nafs*), *nafs-e lawwâma* (the blaming *nafs*), *nafs-e molhama* (the inspired *nafs*), and *nafs-e motma'ena* (*nafs* at rest). The 'commanding *nafs*', also referred to as 'cardinal *nafs*', commands a person to do evil, and the 'blaming *nafs*' chastises itself for its own bad actions. In Sufi literature, when the word *nafs* is used by itself and without any qualifying adjective, it usually refers to the 'commanding *nafs*'. The 'inspired *nafs*' is inspired by God to do good. 'Nafs-at-rest' is *nafs* which has become purified and perfected through *noor-e del* 'light of the heart' and is thought of as residing within the *del* 'heart'.

11.4 *Del* 'spiritual heart', *ruh* 'spirit', and *serr* 'inner consciousness' in Sufism

Del is the spiritual heart which is site contested by *nafs* and *ruh* 'spirit' and which-ever wins the battle conquers the heart. Nurbakhsh (1992: 72) observes that the spiritual heart "is the site of all knowledge and perfections of the spirit and the site of the appearance of the revelations of Divine Manifestations through different levels of the Essence". He notes that "[t]he physical heart governs the physical body and the spiritual heart governs the psyche" (p. 76). A Sufi strives to purify the heart through detachment from the world and *nafs*, and through attention to God. Detachment from the world is achieved through suppressing the outward senses, which can plague the heart. Once this is achieved, the Sufi's mission is to resist the satanic temptations of his *nafs*. An important weapon during this battle is constant remembrance of God (*zeker*). Nurbakhsh (1992: 106) observes that "[t]he virtue of the remembrance is that it effaces and removes all turbidity and veiling which Satan and the *nafs* have rooted in the heart".

The Sufi's *del* is conceptualised as the 'home' of spiritual love for the Beloved, that is, God. Nurbakhsh (1992: 91) maintains that *del*'s "very existence is founded on love, and the existence of love is through it". Part of a Sufi poem by Sa'dôd-Din Hamuya (cited in Nurbakhsh, 1992: 83) reads, "[i]f there were no heart, where

would love build a home?” For a Sufi, the attainment of this love is through cleansing of the heart from the plague of desires and passions.

Once it attains perfection, the heart becomes the site of the manifestations of all God’s attributes, which are of two types: grace and wrath. This is the stage of Unity with God, in which a Sufi finds God in his heart. Ahmadi and Ahmadi (1998: 64) summarise a Sufi’s spiritual journey in terms of two steps: stepping out of one’s self, and stepping into God.

Del is also the site of *ruh* ‘spirit’. Nurbakhsh (1992: 113) maintains that “[t]he site of spirit is that level of the heart that enjoys a view-point of the lights of God, where God spontaneously displays theophanies without veils”. The spirit is strongly associated with love and they are viewed as becoming one, as one manifestation of Unity. In general, the Sufi path is predominantly characterised by the quest for unification and unity, and fight against multiplication and multiplicity. The unity of love and spirit is one form of this goal. According to Ahmadi and Ahmadi (1998: 70), “[f]rom the point of view of Sufis, what makes the unification of man and God possible is Love”. For a Sufi, “[l]ove is a Divine attraction. When it finds its way into a heart, it dries up the roots of that person’s being, linking the heart to Absolute Being [God]” (Nurbakhsh, 1992: 117). This love falls into the heart of a person who has been able to battle all the egocentric tendencies of *nafs*. This love is associated with self-sacrifice and the rejection of egocentricity, pride and self conceit (Ahmadi & Ahmadi, 1998: 70).

The stage of *serr* or ‘inner consciousness’ is when God’s ‘secrets’ or ‘mysteries’, called ‘the Unseen’, become revealed to the Sufi. At this stage, God’s hidden revelations become available to one’s inner consciousness, but not to the spirit or the heart. *Serr-e serr*, or innermost consciousness, is “the perfection of advancement of the human psyche, a station at which the Gnostics see God through God and only God is aware of this. It is “the sea of Unity” (Nurbakhsh, 1992: 131).

In summary, the Sufi spiritual path is characterised by annihilation, or what Ahmad and Ahmadi (1998: 67) call the ‘abnegation’ of ‘self’ (here referring to *nafs-e ammâreh*) in order to reach God and Unite with Him, in what is called the Unity of Existence. As Ahmadi and Ahmadi (1998: 72) put it, “through this process, one proceeds from the state of ‘I-ness’ to the state of ‘He-ness’ and from there to the state of ‘one-ness’”. This state of one-ness is the Unification with God. Nurbakhsh summarises the Sufi path diagrammatically as follows:

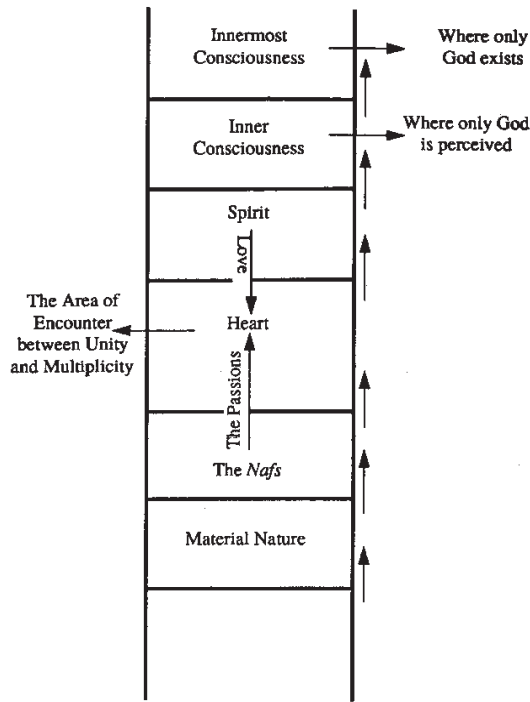


Table of the Stages of the Human Psyche's Advancement and Perfection in the Traversal of the Sufi Path

(Source: Nurbakhsh, 1992: 3)

11.5 Conceptualisations of *del* ‘heart’ in Sufism

As mentioned above, *del* ‘the heart’ in Sufism is conceptualised as the ‘home’ of love and Spirits. It is also conceptualised as the source of faith, site of the light of the intellect and locus of insight (Nurbakhsh, 1992: 99). Nurbakhsh (1992: 99) states that the heart “is the site of the light of submissiveness (*khoshu*) purity, love, contentment, certitude, fear, hope, patience, and satisfaction, with sufficiency, as well as being the source of the principles of knowledge”. It is also the source of loving-kindness and compassion towards others. However, it can also be a home to *nafs* and egotistic tendencies and traits.

Thus, among the conceptualised qualities of the heart is its ability to be sound or corrupt. A sound heart is pure and a corrupt one is turbid (Nurbakhsh, 1992). If the heart falls under the control of *nafs* then it becomes 'dead', whereas if it is filled with spiritual attributes it becomes 'alive'. In Persian, someone who has a 'live heart' is referred to as *sâheb-del* 'possessor-*del*'.

Viewed by master Sufis one characteristic of *del*, as, is its ability to contract and expand. Nurbakhsh (1992: 79) quotes Bâyezid as having stated that the "[t]he contraction of the heart occurs with the expansion of the *nafs*, and the other way round". Although a thorough discussion of the Sufi path and its different versions and interpretations fall beyond the scope of this chapter (see for example Chittick, 1989; Sedgwick, 2003), what has been discussed so far suffices to provide a context for the discussion of the influence of the Sufi conceptualisations of 'self' and 'heart' on Persian literature and language. The following section presents an account of this influence on Persian literature.

11.6 Conceptualisations of Sufi path in Persian literature

The Sufi spiritual tradition has had a significant influence on Persian literature, especially through the work of the Persian-speaking mystical poets. Persian literature, in particular poetry, abounds with Sufi imagery, which is used by both Sufi and non-Sufi poets. Ahmadi and Ahmadi (1998: 71) note that

After Halaj [a Sufi poet], the doctrine of self-inhibition became more and more and more common among Sufis and occupied a vast place in Persian poetry, something that has been quite important in laying the foundations of Iranians' conception of self.

Sufi poets and scholars have been very influential in imparting Sufi conceptualisations of *nafs* and *del* to the Persian psyche, or what Ahmadi and Ahmadi call 'Iranian ways of thinking'. They argue that Persian Sufism

is the view maintained by great number of Iranian 'philosophers', from the thirteenth century up until modern times, and this view, we maintain, has had a great impact on the ways of thinking of Iranians because of the integration of Sufi ideas in Iranian thought.
(Ahmadi & Ahmadi, 1998: 73)

The word 'philosopher' here of course would need to be interpreted in a wider sense than that with which it is associated in the West today. The list of the Sufi scholars and poets would be too long to include here, but among the names of the most influential ones are Sanâ'i, Nâser Khosro, Attâr, Maghribi, Jâmi, Hâfiz and Molavi (known to Westerners as Rumi). Sanâ'i (also written as Sanâi and Sanâ'i) is

generally viewed as the first Persian poet who used poetry to present Sufism and he had great influence on Attâr and Rumi. In the works written by these mystic poets and scholars there are frequent references to *nafs* and *del*, such as the following:

One who was aware said:

Destruction of the *nafs* means destruction of its ugly nature.

(Attar, cited in Nurbakhsh, 1992: 45)

I found this path, this way,

Nafs was a curtain, an obstacle for me

(Rumi, cited in Can, 2005: 257)

The true heart is such that even in a moment of catastrophe you find absolutely nothing therein but God

(Nuro'd-Din Esfarayini, cited in Nurbakhsh, 1992: 76)

The deliciousness of milk and honey is the reflection of the pure heart [*del*]:
from that heart the sweetness of every sweet thing is derived.

The heart is the substance, and the world the accident:

how should the heart's shadow be the object of the heart's desire?

Is that pure heart the heart that is enamoured of riches or power,

or is submissive to this black earth and water of the body,

or to vain fancies it worships in the darkness for the sake of fame?

The heart is nothing but the Sea of Light:

is the heart the place of vision of God – and then blind?

(Rumi, cited on <http://www.tue.nl/esk/rumi/rheart.htm>)

It can be seen in these excerpts that the references to *nafs* and 'heart', for example, as the place of vision of God, are consistent with Sufi conceptualisations. Most references to *nafs* seem to be consistent with the conceptualisation of *nafs-e ammâreh*, or the 'commanding self'. The references to *del*, however, appear to be used either in a positive or a negative sense. That is, in some cases, references to *del* are associated with censure of its 'earthly' desires and passions, while in other cases, as in the above excerpt from Rumi, it is praised for its precious and spiritual qualities. The following is an example of a poem by Bâbâ Tâher in which he addresses his *del* in a complaining tone:

*Megar*²⁸ *shiro pelangi ey del ey del – beh mo dâyem beh jangi ey del ey del*²⁹

lion-and leopard-be oh *del*! oh *del*! – with me always in fight-be oh *del*! oh *del*!

Addressed to *del*: 'Are you a lion or a leopard, as you always fight with me?'

28. *Megar*, which is pronounced as *magar* in Standard Persian, is an interrogative marker.

29. Baba Taher's poetry is in fact written in a rustic local dialect, which adds a great degree of beauty and genuineness to it. The translation to English, it is acknowledged, makes Baba Taher's poetry largely devoid of its charm, including its dialectal beauty.

Here, in reference to the desires and passions of *del*, the poet conceptualises his *del* as a wild animal fighting with him. As noted earlier, these traits are primarily attributed to *nafs* in Sufism, but *del* can fall under the influence of *nafs*. Consistent with the discussion of these two concepts earlier in this chapter, it seems that the *del* that is praised for its spiritual qualities is under the influence of *ruh* ‘spirit’, and the *del* that is the subject of complaint and is being condemned for its earthly and egotistic desires is under the sway of *nafs*.

11.6.1 *Del* and conceptual metaphors

As discussed above, in Sufism, *del* refers to a spiritual level and not a physical organ. The concept of ‘heart’ here is metaphorical and based on certain analogies with the physical heart, as explained by Nurbakhsh (1992: 75), as follows:

The physical heart is in a constant state of alteration, regulating the changes between arterial or subtle blood and venal or gross blood. The spiritual heart is also in a constant state of alteration, here rotating back and forth between the subtle influences of the spirit and the gross influences of *nafs*.

He also notes the analogy between the role of the physical heart in purifying the body, through purifying the blood, and the role of the spiritual heart in purifying the human spirit. The spiritual purification is achieved when “the spiritual heart receives the gross traits of the *nafs* and purifies them with the help of the spirit, converting them into spiritual traits of character, to foster the soundness of a person’s psyche” (Nurbakhsh, 1992: 75).

Sufi scholars have also used other metaphors to refer to the spiritual heart, for example, as a ‘lamp’, giving off spiritual light, or a “wave from the midst of which fire springs, consuming the body” (Abo’l-Hasan Khârqani, cited in Nurbakhsh, 1992: 81).

In Persian literature, a common conceptualisation of *del* is in terms of a person, or the conceptual metaphor of *DEL AS A PERSON*. This includes the conceptualisation of *del* as a person with erratic desires and passions who is constantly fighting the poet. There are also other conceptual imageries of *del*, such as *del* as an animal, as reflected in Bâbâ’s poem presented earlier in this chapter. A description of the creation of *del* is found in the following poem:

az shabnam-e eshgh khâk-e âdam gel shod,
from dew-of love soil-of man mud became
shoor-i barkhâst fetne-i hâsel-shod,
turmoil-one occurred calamity resulted

sar-neshtar-e eshgh bar rag--e ruh zad-and,
lancet-of love to vein-of spirit hit-3PL

yek ghatre az ân chekid o nâm-ash del shod.
one droplet from it dropped and name-1SL *del* became.

‘The clay of Adam was made
malleable by the dew of love;
As a result, hundred calamities
and turmoils appeared in the world.
The lancet of love
Prickled the vein of spirit,
A drop dripped down,
and its name became heart [*del*]

(Majdo'd-Din Baghdâdi, translation cited in Nurbakhsh, 1992:72)

It can be seen here that *del* ‘the heart’ is conceptualised as a droplet which drips from *ruh* ‘the spirit’, when it is touched by love. This is an example of a Persian poem that reflects the interplay between love, the spirit and the heart. Against the backdrop of *nafs* and *del* in Sufism and Persian literature, I will now return to the conceptualisations of *nafs* and *del* in Persian language.

11.7 *Nafs* and *del* in the model Persian language

11.7.1 *Nafs*

As seen above, Persian has constructions that include the morpheme *nafs*, such as *ezat-e nafs* ‘self-esteem’ and *shekasteh-nafsi* ‘modesty’. Expressions such as *ezat-e nafs* appear to view *nafs* positively, worthy of high esteem and regard. This conception of *nafs* reflects those levels of *nafs* in Sufism, the ‘inspired *nafs*’ and ‘*nafs*-at-rest’, that are regarded as approaching perfection and purification.

The concept of *nafs* in *shekasteh-nafsi* seems to refer to the *nafs* that needs to be suppressed and ‘broken’. It captures the Sufi’s battle with their materialistic and carnal *nafs*, in particular with traits such as selfishness and pride. For example, an instantiation of *shekasteh-nafsi* during conversations among Persian speakers is showing modesty by somehow rejecting offered compliments. According to Sufism, “the *nafs* likes to be complimented and praised by others” (from Resâlâ-ye Qoshairi, cited in Nurbakhsh, 1992: 10). Thus, as part of the battle with his *nafs*, a Sufi should reject compliments or somehow distance himself from them. In line with this, when receiving compliments and praise, Persian speakers tend to

vigorously deflect a compliment, play it down, return it to the person who gave it, or reassign it to an interlocutor, a family member, and/or God (see Chapter 9). This exercise intended to ‘suppress’ or ‘tame’ the desire one’s *nafs-e ammâreh* has to feel proud of and very positive about ‘earthly’ and materialistic possessions, one’s appearance, achievements, etc.

In general, *shekasteh-nafsi* is exercised through any form of undermining one’s self, and, where possible, highlighting the merits of others. Beeman (1986) refers to this tendency among Iranians as ‘self-lowering’ and ‘other-raising’. Ahmadi and Ahmadi (1998) also observe this trait among Iranians, but without explicitly calling it *shekasteh-nafsi*. They observe that

in Iran, the acceptable cultural structure determining the individual’s behavioural pattern at home, in school, in the workplace, and so on, leads the ‘individual’ to underestimate himself and to overestimate others. Actually, the more one underestimates oneself and respects others, the more one is regarded as respectable and ‘good’ person (p. 177)

Again it should be emphasised that while Sufism is not a strong spiritual tradition in contemporary Iranian society, Persian speakers highly pride themselves on their well-known works of literature, including Sufi literature, and promote its ethos as it has been incorporated in Persian literature. It is this ethos that seems to account for the conceptualisation of *shekasteh-nafsi* among Persian speakers. Ahmadi and Ahmadi (1998: 104) observe that “Persian literature is full of texts urging everyone to pay respect to others, to be extremely polite in front of others, not to speak of one’s ‘I’ and one’s achievements”. This cultural norm is again in line with *shekasteh-nafsi*, or battling with one’s *nafs-e ammâreh*. Ahmadi and Ahmadi note the influence of the conceptualisations of Sufism not only on literature but also on the Persian language and, consequently, communications between Persian speakers. They maintain, “if Sufism could so deeply influence Iranian culture, it was not only due to a strong tendency of Iranians towards poetry, but also to the impact of Sufism on the conversation and the development of the Persian language” (Ahmadi & Ahmadi, 1998: 51). The following section explores this influence on the semantic conceptualisations of the word *del* in Persian.

11.7.2 *Del*

The word *del* in contemporary Persian is a polysemous morpheme. Aryanpur Persian-English Dictionary (Aryanpur Kashani & Aryanpur Kashani, 1984) translates it as “heart, stomach, abdomen, belly, guts, mind, courage, patience, middle”. It is used in a physical sense to refer to the area of the body below the chest and above the pelvis, roughly similar to the area described in English as the ‘abdomen’. An

example of its use in this sense would be to say *del-am dard mikoneh* (*del*-my pain does) meaning ‘I feel a pain in my *del*’. In its figurative usage, including its usage in literary texts, and also in some ethnomedical texts, the word *del* refers to the heart. For example, many Persian poems clearly reflect that the organ that is conceptualised is the blood-pumping organ. Consider the following from Eghbal Lahouri:

- (22) *Del az zogh-e tapesh del bood likan.*
Del from zeal-of beating *del* was yet
 ‘*Del* earned its eminence due to its love of beating, otherwise.’
- (23) *Cho yek-dam az tapesh oftâd gel shod.*
 as a-moment from beating fell mud became
 ‘If it ceased to beat for a second it became mud.’

Persian also has the word *ghalb*, which is a borrowing from Arabic, referring to the heart. The word *ghalb* has been used to refer to the physical heart and has also increasingly been conceptualised as the seat of emotions, reflected in sentences such as to *dar ghalb-e mani* ‘you are in my heart’ meaning ‘I love you’.

A number of idiomatic expressions in Persian reflect particular image-schemas that underlie the conceptualisations of *del*. For example, the expression *shesh gooshe-ye del*³⁰ (six corners-of *del*) suggests the involvement of a six-sided container image-schema. The expression may be used in relation to willingness and satisfaction, as in (24) below:

- (24) *Ageh shesh gooshe-ye del-et râzi-e boro.*
 if six corner-of *del*-your happy-is go
 ‘If you are really willing, you can go.’

Conceptualisation of *del* as a container is also reflected in expressions which suggest that *del* can be emptied or filled (e.g. *khâli kardan-e del* [emptying-of *del*] ‘to vent one’s negative feelings, especially anger’). *Del* may also be conceptualised as having a bottom and a top, especially when referring to sincerity. A sincere remark is said to be made from the bottom of the *del* (*az tah-e del* [from bottom-of *del*]) and an unfounded remark may be described as being from the top of the *del* (*az sar-e del* [from top-of *del*]). Moreover, there are expressions that suggest *del* can be narrowed and tightened. A very productive verb in Persian, *deltangi kardan* (*del*.narrow do), which refers to ‘missing something or someone’, associates the feeling of missing with tightening or narrowing of *del*. In fact the English sentence *I miss him/her* translates into Persian as follows:

30. It is to be noted that there are certain cross-dialectal differences in the use of the expressions that include the word *del* in contemporary Persian and thus some Persian readers may find some expressions included in this chapter unfamiliar.

- (25) *Del-am barâyash tang shodeh.*
del-my for.him/her narrow/tight has.become.
 'I miss him/her.'

One's *del* may also be described as 'thin' (*delnâzok* [*del*+thin]). This expression is close to 'having a tender heart' in English. *Del* may also be described as 'collapsed' (*del-am rikht* [*del-my* collapsed]), which refers to being shocked or startled. A shocking incident may be described as 'scratching the *del*' (*del-kharâsh* [*del*+scratch]) and one may describe their horrifying experience in terms of their *del* being pulled out of place, as in the following sentence:

- (26) *Del-am az jâsh kande shod.*
del-my from its.place pulled.out became
 'I was horrified.'

The word *del* can also be used in Persian to refer to the middle or inner part of something. The middle of the night, for example, might be referred to as the *del-e shab* (*del*-of night), a conceptualisation that is parallel to the English the 'heart of the night'.

Some of the meanings attached to the word *del* are reminiscent of the use of this concept in Sufism. These meanings are discussed below in reference to their conceptual counterparts in Sufi tradition.

11.7.3 *Del* as the seat of emotions/feelings and desires

As noted earlier, in the Sufi tradition *del* is conceptualised as the seat of spiritual love for the Beloved (i.e. God). In a similar way, *del* is used in modern Persian in constructions and expressions, particularly in more formal and literary styles, that reflect the conceptual metaphor of *DEL AS THE SEAT OF LOVE*. In modern Persian this expression can refer to love for a human beloved. In other words, during its journey from Sufism to modern Persian, the word *del* has broadened the scope of its semantic coverage. For example, emotional attachment is referred to as *del-basteh-gi* (*del*-tied-ness), and falling in love is referred to as *del-bâkhtan* (*del*-losing). Someone who is deeply in love is referred to as *del-dâdeh* [*del*+given]), and a beloved, *del-bar* (*del*+winner), is viewed as someone who has won the heart of the lover.

A notable use of the word *del* in everyday conversations among Persian speakers is in reference to emotional attachment when the object of affection is conceptualised as having found a place in the *del* of the person who loves/likes them, as in the following example:

Minâ Khodesh ro tu del-e bâbâ-sh jâ kard-e
 Mina Himself/herself DO marker in *del*-of father-her place has.done³¹
 ‘Mina is her dad’s favourite girl.’

11.7.4 *Del* as the source of compassion

In Sufi tradition, the heart is also the source of loving-kindness and compassion. This conceptualisation corresponds with the usage of *del* in the following expressions in modern Persian:

- (27) *Susan kheili del-rahm-e*
 Susan very *del*-mercy-BE
 ‘Susan is very compassionate.’
- (28) *Del-am barâ doost-am beh rahm oomad*
Del-my for friend-my to mercy came
 ‘I felt pity for my friend.’
- (29) *Del-am barâ mâmân-am sookht.*
Del-my for mum-mine burnt
 ‘I empathised with/felt sad for my mum.’

It can be seen that compassion is conceptualised here as ‘one’s *del* coming to feel mercy’ or ‘one’s *del* being burnt’.

11.7.5 *Del* as the source of desires

The Sufis also believe the heart can fall under the negative influence of *nafs* and adopt its traits, such as having desires and passions, which are negatively viewed in Sufism. Nurbakhsh (1992: 16) maintains that *nafs* “persistently tempts one to indulge in carnal carvings and to seek sensual gratification. It draws to one’s side material desires, causing one to comply with passions”. In Persian literature, there are numerous negative references to *del* and that usage appears to be a shorthand for ‘*del* that is under the influence of *nafs*’, rather than the *del* that is under the influence of *ruh* ‘spirit’. This usage is also commonly observed in everyday expressions that associate *del* with cravings and desires.

31. In the examples, the equivalents given under each word are meant to serve merely as a semantic guide and should not to be taken as the exact morphosyntactic equivalents.

In Persian today, desires attributable to *del* are of various types, ranging from physical desires, such as a craving for some kind of food, to psychological desires, such as a wish to see somebody or a wish to achieve some goals. The following are two examples of such usage:

Del-am keik mikhâd.
del-my cake wants
 'I fancy cake/I'd like some cake.'
Del-am mikhâd beram mosâferat
Del-mine wants go.me trip.
 'I'd like to take a trip.'

It is apparent that the desires and craving are attributed to the heart, and therefore 'my *del* wants' rather than 'I want'. In a sense, the speaker here passes the blame for their desiring something on to their *del*. Nurbakhsh (1992) explains this usage as an example of ordinary people's confusion of *del* with *nafs*. He notes, "[w]hen one says, 'it is my heart's desire that ...', it is not the heart that is desiring; the desire comes from the *nafs*". However, as he himself observes, it is possible for the heart to be under the sway of *nafs*, revealing the latter's negative tendencies. He maintains that "if the heart becomes dominated by the *nafs*, it becomes darkened by the tarnish of the *nafs*' multiplicity, taking on its hue" (Nurbakhsh, 1992:71).

Persian speakers may refer to their desires as *harf-e del*, as in the following examples:

Kesi ke donbâl-e harf-e del-esh mireh
 One who follow-of word-of del-his/her goes
 'Someone who follows their desires.'
Kesi ke beh harf-e del-esh goosh mideh
 One who to word-of heart-his/her ear gives
 'Someone who obeys their desires.'

Here, one's *del* is conceptualised as having the ability to persuade one to follow its desires, reflecting the conceptualisation of *DEL AS A PERSON*. For Persian speakers, someone who follows his/her heart is always considered as desire-driven and, as such, lacking morality.

11.7.6 *Del* as the seat of 'intellect'

In Sufism, *del* is also seen as the source of 'intellect' and the 'knowledge' of spiritual mysteries, that is, gnosis. Lings (1975:48) notes that in Sufism, "'heart' is often to be found as a synonym of 'intellect', not in the sense in which this word is

misused today but the full sense of the Latin *intellectus*, that is, the faculty which perceives the transcendent". As discussed earlier, in Sufism, the higher levels of the 'heart' and the 'spirit' are capable of perceiving the Divine 'secrets', or 'mysteries' and 'manifestations' of God.

Nurbakhsh (1990) refers to two kinds of intellect in the Sufi tradition: *aghl-e joz* 'the particular intellect', and *aghl-e koli* 'the universal intellect'. A closer translation of the expressions for these two types of intellect would be 'micro-intellect' and 'macro-intellect'. The 'particular intellect' is acquired as a result of daily experiences. This type of intellect is used to protect human beings against calamities and disasters, as well as enabling them to learn about and control nature. This intellect may also be used to tame the *nafs* and its desires when they go wild. However, it can never provide one with insight into the Divine Truth and it is often disparaged by the Sufi for this limitation. Nurbakhsh (1990) cites Rumi as having commented on this intellect as follows:

The acquired intellect is like the conduits
which run into a house from the streets:
[If the house's] water-way is blocked,
it is without any supply [of water].
Seek the fountain from within yourself!³²

The universal intellect, or *del âgâhi*, is the intellect that reveals the Truth that flows from God to man. Nurbakhsh (1990) notes that

When the heart becomes cleansed of the rust of multiplicity, it will reflect the Truth as it is. A person in such a state is called a Perfect Man, and the source of his knowledge or insight, which is devoid of delusion, error, self-love and profit-seeking, is called the universal intellect or 'heart-consciousness'.³³

A word of caution needs to be added here about these interpretations of 'intellect' and 'love'. In Sufi literature, where the intellect is disparaged as inferior to love, it is *aghl-e joz* 'the particular intellect' that is meant, while 'love' in that context refers to the spiritual love for God. In contexts where the *aghl-e koli* 'the universal intellect' is referred to, it is elevated above love, which in that context refers to the love or lust for a human beloved which is viewed as a trait of *nafs*.

In Persian literature, there are references to *aghl*, consistent with the Sufi view, that clearly reflect conceptualisations of HEART AS THE SEAT OF INTELLECT. The following example from poetry has been attributed to Ghavamolsaltaneh:

32. <http://www.humanevol.com/doc/doc200307151102.html>

33. <http://www.humanevol.com/imprimir/doc200307151102.html>

Aghl migoft ke del manzel o ma'vây-e man ast
 intellect said that *del* home and abode-of mine BE
 'intellect said, "*del* is my home"

Eshgh khandid ke yâ jây-e to yâ jây-e man ast
 Love laughed that either place-of you or place-of me BE
 'Love laughed and said, "It is either your place or my place."

The basic presupposition behind this poem is that both love and intellect reside in *del*, but as the two are not in harmony with each other they battle over its occupancy. In this case 'love' refers to the earthly love for a human, not the spiritual love for God, which is the kind of love that resides in the heart of the Sufi.

There are constructions in the Persian language that reflect these conceptualisations of *del* as the source of the intellect. Most notably are those that reflect conceptualisations of *del* as the place for keeping secrets, as in the following example:

yek chiz-i mig-am tu del-et bezâr/negah-dâr va beh kesi
 One thing-ART will.say-me in *del*-your put/keep and to anyone
nagoo.
 don't say
 'Please keep what I am going to tell you as a secret.'

Here, *del* is conceptualised as a container for the safekeeping of secrets. One's most personal thoughts, those that one may not want to reveal explicitly, are referred to as (*harf-e del* [talk/word-of *del*]) and one's secret is referred to as *râz-e del* 'secret of *del*'. Someone who is not usually good at hiding thoughts and secrets is referred to as someone, whose *del* is on the tip of his/her tongue (*del-esh sar-e zaboon-esh-e* [*del*-his/her tip-of tongue-his/her-is]).

By corollary, there is this idiomatic expression that describes honest people as those whose tongue and *del* are the same:

Royâ del o zaboon-esh yeki-e
 Roya *del* and tongue-her one-is
 'Roya is honest.'

This expression suggests that honest thoughts, ideas, opinions, etc. originate from the heart and become directly verbalised through the tongue. It should be added here that in modern Persian, thinking is usually associated with *zeh*n, which is roughly similar to the conceptualisation of the mind in English.

11.7.7 *Del* as ‘stomach’/‘abdomen’

The discussion presented so far in this chapter clearly suggests the compatibility between the Sufi views of ‘self’ and a multitude of conceptualisations of ‘self’ in Persian language and literature. However, there are cases of the use of the word that tie *del* more literally to the stomach or abdomen. For example, a number of expressions in Persian associate *del* with anxiety. The construction *del-shooreh* refers to turbulence in one’s *del* as a result of anxiety. Here it is clear that *del* refers to ‘stomach’. The fact that anxiety can lead to an upset stomach (for example, the one referred to as ‘butterflies in the stomach’ in English) may be the basis for this conceptualisation, which is a metonymy, as a turbulent stomach is only one component of the experience of anxiety. The usage of this expression is as follows:

Too del-am shoor oftâdeh.
in *del-my* disturbance has fallen
‘I am very anxious/worried.’

Also when one is anxious in the sense of being impatient with anticipation of meeting new people or meeting someone, one is likely to feel physical symptoms of turbulence in the ‘stomach’. This state is referred to as ‘melting of *del*’ or ‘exhaustion of *del*’, as in the following sentence:

begoo chi shodeh, del-am âb/tamum shod.
tell what has happened, *del-my* water/finish became
‘Tell me what happened! I can’t wait to hear it.’

This state may be described as *del too del-am nist* (*del* in *del-my* is not), which roughly means ‘I can’t wait’. They are *del-kuchik* [*del-small*], have a small *del*. On the other hand, someone with excessive patience is referred to as *del-gondeh* [*del-big*], meaning someone who has a big *del*, usually viewed negatively. It should be of course be reiterated from the earlier discussions in this chapter that in Sufism, *del* is also conceptualised as the source of patience, which is consistent with the conceptualisations of *DEL AS THE SEAT OF PATIENCE* presented in this section.

11.7.8 *Del* as the centre of personality traits, character and mood

There are other conceptualisations of *del* in Persian that cannot readily be associated with Sufi conceptualisations of this word. For example, some expressions of *del* reflect conceptualisations of *DEL AS THE CENTRE OF PERSONALITY TRAITS, CHARACTER AND MOOD*. Being gloomy might be described as having a ‘dull’ or a ‘nebulous *del*’ (*del gerefteh*) and feeling cheered may be described as an ‘opening

of the *del* (e.g. *del-am bâz shod* [del-my open became]). With regard to more phlegmatic temperament, someone who is usually cheerless may be referred to as having a 'dead *del*' (*del-mordeh* [del-dead]) and someone who is usually lively and cheerful may be described as having a 'living *del*' (*del-zنده* [del-alive]).

It is to be noted here that conceptualisations such as '*del* is patience' may be regarded as a metaphor involving mapping from one domain onto another. While it is agreed that conceptual mapping is a fundamental conceptual process, it may not always be possible to characterise such processing on the basis of lexical appearance. At some stage, speakers of Persian, for example, may have conceptualised their *del* as the real seat of emotions, without any mapping involved. It is only when later generations attribute emotions to other parts such as the brain that it makes sense to view expressions of '*del* as the seat of emotion' as being metaphorical.

In fact, later generations may simply use the expression as a whole to mean something without explicitly thinking about the body parts that are involved. Also there are times when viewing a conceptualisation as a metaphor reflects an English ethnocentric viewpoint – or different view of the world – which impinges upon the conceptualisation involved. For example, in the context of Australia, while 'crying rain' might be considered to be a metaphor from an Anglo-Australian perspective, from an Aboriginal perspective the event may be conceptualised as the real crying of Ancestors.

A number of idiomatic expressions in Persian profile the schema of *DEL AS COURAGE AND BRAVERY*. The expression *del-dâshtan* (del-having) refers to being courageous. By contrast, *del na-dâshtan* (del not-having) means lack of courage. One may refer to someone as having a lot of *del* and courage (*kheili del o jor ât dâreh* [a.lot.of del and courage has.he/she]). Courage in Persian is also associated with *jegar* 'liver'. Speakers of Persian may use both these body parts in one expression to refer to courage, as in the following example:

- (30) *Rezâ kheili del o jegar dâreh.*
 Reza a.lot del and liver has
 'Reza is very brave.'

Another expression which reflects the conceptualisation of *del* as associated with courage and risk is *del be daryâ zadan* (del to the sea hit), which refers to taking a risk. Different cultures may conceptualise courage in association with different body parts. In Australian English, 'guts' is usually associated with 'courage' whereas in Chinese the 'gallbladder' is conceptualised as the seat of courage (Yu, 2003b).

The word *del* is also frequently used in Persian speakers’ narrative on illness. For example, one may refer to ‘mental stress’ as *del-shooreh dâshtan* ‘having a turbulent *del*’. In fact, the majority of psychological conditions are often attributed to *del*, or *ghalb*, in Persian.

11.8 Concluding remarks

This chapter has traced some conceptualisations of ‘self’ and *del* in Persian back to the Sufi tradition and its influence on Persian literature and language. The data presented and analysed throughout the chapter strongly suggests that contemporary Persian conceptualisations of ‘self’, embodied in concepts such as *shekasteh-nafsi*, echo the Sufi conceptualisations of *nafs*. Also, conceptualisations of the Sufi path of spirituality, and in particular the concept of ‘spiritual heart’, appear to underlie a multitude of meanings associated with the morpheme *del* in various constructions. In this context, Persian literature seems to have served as the vehicle for transmitting ‘carrier’ of conceptualisations of *nafs* and *del* across generations.

As a whole, the chapter presents an account culturally constructed conceptualisations of ‘self’ and *del*. In line with the observations of Ruhi and Isik-Guler (2007) in the case of Turkish, the findings of this chapter point to the interconnection between the conceptualisation of ‘self’ and those of emotion, thinking, politeness, and so on, in Persian. In summary, the analysis of these Persian conceptualisations of ‘self’ and *del* provides a convincing case study of the role of language as a ‘memory bank’ for the cultural conceptualisations that have evolved throughout the history of a particular speech community.

Conceptualisations of *cheshm* ‘eye’ and ‘perception’ in Persian

The human body seems to act as a resource in conceptualising various aspects of our experiences, both internal and external to the body itself. This is reflected in the use of body-part terms to talk about our feelings, thoughts, etc. This chapter focuses on the case of *cheshm* ‘eye’ in Persian. An analysis of the everyday expressions in Persian that include this body-part term reveals conceptualisations of *cheshm* in relation to emotions, including love, envy, greed, as well as character traits such as naivety or wilfulness. This body part is also associated with a Persian cultural schema that equates *cheshm kardan* (eye do), or *cheshm zadan* (eye hit), with ‘casting a charm or spell’ on someone due to envy, animosity, or even as a result of a genuine admiration for a person’s talent, possession, etc. This is believed to invite bad luck in the form of a sickness or loss on the part of the affected person. Overall, the analysis of Persian expressions that are associated with the body-part term ‘eye’ do not reflect UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING as a dominant conceptualisation in everyday use of language by Persian speakers. There are, however, some words which refer to the process of visual perception and which are mainly used in association with thinking. These expressions seem to be reminiscent of a historical cultural conceptualisation that can be traced back to the Pahlvai language, the major form of Middle Persian. The findings of this study provide further support for the claim that there is close interaction between language, body and culture. In other words, it confirms the position that metaphors based on the body do not draw their power from the fact that there is one ‘natural’ way in which we interact physically with our environment.

12.1 Introduction

One of the areas of language that best reflects the interaction between cognition, culture, and language is the use of terms that refer to a body organ, such as the heart (e.g. Maalej, 2004; Yu, 2001, 2002). These expressions have often been described simply as figures of speech, but recent studies in Cognitive Linguistics have shown how the use of the body as a resource or ‘anchor’ in conceptualising

various experiences, including thinking and feeling, is grounded in cultural models (e.g. Gibbs, 1999; Kövecses, 1999; Kövecses, 2000; Sharifian, et al., 2008). In this chapter, I focus on the case of *cheshm* ‘eye’ in Persian to show how the use of this body-part term in various expressions reflect conceptualisations such as that of EYE AS THE SEAT OF EMOTIONS.

Yu (2004) observes that in both English and Chinese, expressions that contain the body-part term ‘eye’ reflect conceptualisations of PERCEPTUAL ORGAN FOR PERCEPTION as well as THINKING, UNDERSTANDING, AND KNOWING IS SEEING. In Modern Persian, while there are also a set of formal words that reflect the conceptualisation of THINKING IS SEEING, the eye is mainly conceptualised in relation to ‘ill-judged’ emotions and personality traits such as envy and greed. This chapter elaborates on these themes by providing examples from the everyday use of Persian expressions that include this body part. Examples where ‘eye’ instantiates a Persian cultural model that attributes magical powers to this body part are also provided.

First, we will begin by looking at some cases where the eye is, in fact, somehow associated with perception, which reflect the conceptual metonymy of PERCEPTUAL ORGAN FOR PERCEPTION. ‘To casually look for something’ is described as *chashm andâkhtan* ‘to throw eye’ as in the following example:

- (31) *Yek cheshm andâkht-am, chizi peidâ na-kard-am*³⁴
 One eye threw-me something find not-did-I?
 ‘I had a look (lit. I threw an eye), but couldn’t find anything.’

The following examples also show this body part involved in the act of perception.

- (32) *Cheshm az-ash bar.nadâr*
 Eye from-it don’t.take
 ‘Keep watching (lit. Don’t take eye from) it closely!’
- (33) *cheshm be.hesh dookhteh bood*
 Eye to.it sewn s/he was
 ‘(He/She) was staring at (lit. had sewn eye to) it/he/she.’

34. I acknowledge here that there are dialectal differences in the use of the Persian expressions used in this chapter, although the differences should be minimal.

- (34) *ageh beh cheshm-et khord bekhar-esh*
 If to eye-yours hit buy-it
 'If you happen to see it (lit. it hit your eye), buy it.'
- (35) *ageh cheshm-am beh.esh biofteh, midun-am bâ.hâsh chikâr konam.*
 If Eye-mine to.him/her fall/drop know-I with.him/her what do
 'If I see him/her (lit. If my eye falls/drops to him/her), I know what to do with him/her.'

It can be seen that in (33) the act of continuous, close watching is conceptualised as 'having an eye on something', terminating the act of watching is conceptualised as 'taking one's eye from it', while in (34) the act of staring at something is conceptualised as 'sewing an eye on it'. This has similarities with the English expressions 'keeping an eye on something', and 'taking one's eyes off something'. In sentence (35) coming across a 'thing' is conceptualised as 'one's eye hitting something' whereas in (36) coming across a person is understood as 'one's eye falling/drop onto someone'. This has things in common with Chinese where "seeing takes place when one's eye 'reaches' the target" (Yu, 2004: 666). It seems that there are similarities in conceptualisations of eye/perception across different languages and cultures. In the case of Persian and English, the reader is reminded that these two languages have a common proto-language, that is Indo-European; so similarities may have historical roots. Nevertheless, where English extends the eye metaphor to 'accurate, unclouded or correctly judged' perception/thought, these expressions remain firmly located in the first level of literal seeing.

It should be added here that literary Persian includes another word for 'eye' which is *deedeh*. This word is used in many poems, exemplified in the following stanza from Bâbâ Tâher, an 11th century Persian poet and mystic:

- (36) *zeh dasteh deedeh o del hardo faryâd*
 From hand the.eye and the.heart both shout
 '~I am frustrated with both the eye and the heart.'
- (37) *Harâncheh deedeh beenad del konad yâd*
 Whatever the.eye sees the.heart does remember
 'Whatever the eye sees, the heart remembers/longs for.'

The stem of the word *deedeh* is *deed*, which refers to eyesight and in fact the word for the act of perception in Modern Persian is *deedan*. In this case then the act of perception takes part in forming a word that refers to the perceptual organ (i.e. *deedeh*).

12.2 *Cheshm* and conceptualisations of emotions in Persian

The body-part *cheshm* is used very frequently in conceptualisations of emotions in Persian. It is very closely linked to *del* ‘heart-stomach’, which is generally conceptualised as the seat of emotions such as love in Persian (refer to Chapter 11). In fact, many literary texts in Persian refer to *cheshm-e del* ‘eye of the heart’, as the spiritual insight as opposed to physical insight. This conceptualisation has its origins in Sufism, a mystic spiritual tradition, which has immensely influenced Persian literature and language. In Sufism, *del* refers not to the physical but the spiritual heart, and it is in the spiritual heart where a Sufi, in his journey towards perfection, eventually perceives the manifestations of God (Nurbakhsh, 1992). The spiritual heart is capable of seeing what the physical eye cannot perceive. It is the site of the vision *âlameh gheib* ‘the Unseen World’. The close affinity in Sufism between the eye and the heart as sites of emotions has been absorbed by Persian literature and from there has spread outwards to more general conceptualisations of the eye in the Persian language. This close link between the eye, both in the spiritual sense and the physical sense, and the heart in Persian literature is reflected in (36) and (37), and in the following popular saying:

- (38) Az *del* *beravad* *har.ânkeh az deede* *beraft*
 From the heart would.be.gone the.one from the.eye is.gone.
 ‘Goes from the heart, the one who goes out of the sight.’

The above saying may seem similar to the English saying ‘out of sight, out of mind’. However, the Persian expression captures both the emotional and mental aspect of forgetting a person who is no longer seen. Although in Modern Persian *zahn* ‘mind’, associated with the brain, is largely conceptualised as the centre of thinking, *del* reflects conceptualisations of both emotions and thinking/remembering. The English expression ‘out of sight, out of mind’ on the other hand, does not point the speaker or listener to the emotional dimensions that accompany the process of forgetting or becoming less attached to an absent person.

12.2.1 *Cheshm* as the seat of love

The emotion most strongly associated with the eye in Persian is love. Such expressions are usually used between family members such as a mother and a child, and do not convey the sense of a romantic love. Consider the following sentences:

- (39) a. *Nasrin cheshm-â-m-e*
 Nasrin eye-PL-my-is
 ‘I love Nasrin dearly (lit. Nasrin is my eyes).’

- b. *Bâbak Noor-e cheshm-e mâmân-esh-e*
 Bâbak light-of eye-of mother-his-is
 'Bâbak is the apple of his mother's eye
 (lit. Bâbak is the light of his mother's eye).'
- c. *dokhtar-am roo cheshm-â-m jâ dâreh*
 daughter-mine on eye-PL-mine place has
 'I love my daughter dearly (lit. My daughter has place on my eye).'

In (a), love is conceptualised in terms of one's eye, in the sense that the loved person is equated with one's eye. In (b), the loved person is conceptualised as the light of one's eye, which is roughly equivalent to the conceptualisation of 'apple of the eye' in English. This second expression reflects the conceptualisation of EYES ARE LIGHT SOURCES, which is dominant in Chinese (Yu, 2004). However, in Chinese, eye-light is conceptualised as being able to hit a target with the meanings of 'eye-sight, foresight, vision, and insight' (Yu, 2004:666) whereas in Persian eye-light is associated with emotion. In (39) loving someone is conceptualised as 'having place on one's eye'. The following is another expression that associates eye with affection:

- (40) *Siroos az chesh-am oftâdeh*
 Siroos from eye-mine has.fallen
 'I don't like Siroos anymore/I don't have any feelings for Siroos anymore
 (lit. Siroos has fallen from my eye).'

It can be seen that the loss of one's positive attitude toward and feeling about another person is here conceptualised as 'that person falling from one's eye'. This expression also reflects an image-schema whereby the eye is conceptualised as a place from/off which someone can fall. If this negative feeling towards someone is intensified it can be said that 'one doesn't have eye to see that person', as in the following expression:

- (41) *Cheshm na.dâram bebin-am-esh*
 Eye not.have see-me-him
 'I hate him (lit. I don't have eye to see him).'

In Persian, the eye may also be used to conceptualise attraction, such as towards a car or a house, as in the following example:

- (42) a. *In mâchin cheshm-am ro gereft-e, mikhâm*
 This car eye-mine DO marker has.caught want.I
bekharamesh
 to.buy.me
 'I like this car (lit. This car has taken my eye). I'd like to buy it'

- b. *Cheshm-am in mâshin ro gereft-e*
 eye-mine this car DO marker has.caught
 'I like this car (lit. My eye has taken this car).'

It can be seen that attraction to a car is here conceptualised as 'the car catching one's eye' or 'the eye getting/holding the car', which are expressions similar to some found in English.

12.2.2 *Cheshm* as the seat of envy

Another feeling that is associated with the eye in Persian is envy. To begin with, a person who is envious of others' successes and progress is referred to as *cheshm o nazar tang* 'eye and vision narrow', which means having narrow eye/eyesight. This is not dissimilar to the physical narrowing of the eyes which is associated with negative emotions (particularly hatred) in English. Other expressions in which the eye is conceptualised in relation to envy include:

- (43) a. *Nemitooneh pishrafteh mâ ro bebineh*
 Can't.he/she progress our DO marker see
 'He/she is envious of our progress (lit. He/she can't see our progress).'
- b. *Cheshm-e deedan-e man ro na.dâreh*
 Eye-of see-EZ³⁵ me DO marker not.have
 'He/she hates me (due to envy) (lit. He/she doesn't have eye of seeing me).'
- c. *Cheshm-esh koor mishe barâ mâ*
 Eye-his/her blind becomes for us
 'He/she is envious of us (lit. Her eye becomes blind for us).'
- d. *Tokhm-e cheshm-esh barâ mâ dar.miâd*
 Ball-of eye-his/her for us out.comes
 'He/She is envious of us (lit. The ball of his/her eye come out for us).'

In (43a) envy is conceptualised as 'not being able to see someone', in the sense of not being able to tolerate seeing the object of envy. This is conceptualised as 'not having an eye to see someone' in (b), 'one's eye becoming blind' in (c), and 'one's eyeball coming out' in (d). The intensity of envy increases from (a) to (d), so intense envy is conceptualised as the desire for the envious person to be blinded, so as to be able to avoid seeing the object of envy for ever. These expressions seem to be partly metonymically motivated. A prominent aspect in becoming envious

35. EZ is the grammatical abbreviation of *ezâfe*, which refers to morphemes that provide a link between various constituents within a noun phrase in Persian, and are frequently used to form possessive and attributive constructions, among others.

of people or their possessions is seeing them, so envy is likely to lead to a desire not to see these people or their possessions that are the object of envy. Such conceptualisations of course may exist in totally different languages and cultures. For example, Swartz (1998) observes the association of the eye with envy in Mombasa Swahili and maintains that for these speakers, “envy begins in the eyes that see what is desirable, is experienced and influenced in the heart where the desire to have what the other has is produced and may find expression through the tongue thus spreading and increasing the envy” (Swartz, 1998:30). Again, here the motivation for the association of the eye with envy seems to be rather metonymic as perception is considered a cause of envy.

The eye in Persian is also associated with a cultural schema that attributes certain destructive powers to the eyes. The expression *cheshm kardan* (eye do), or *chashm zadan* (eye hit) in Persian roughly means ‘casting a charm or spell’ on someone or something, either intentionally or subconsciously. This is accomplished largely through envy and animosity, or it can even be a result of genuine admiration of a person’s talent, possession, etc. The charm may invite, either intentionally or inadvertently, bad luck in terms of a sickness or a loss on the part of the envied person. A person with the power to cast this kind of charm is described as having a salty eye (*cheshm-e shur*, lit eye-salty). The casting of such a charm may be attributed to anyone suspected of envy. Traditionally people took, and still may take, certain measures to counteract such evil powers and intentions. Touching wood is associated with complimenting and often the giver of the compliment touches wood to protect the receiver. Burning certain leaves in the house of a person liable to attract envy is another custom. The association of the eye with jealousy (e.g. Ameka, 2002; Swartz, 1998), evil powers, and the notion of the evil eye, is also found in other cultures. Nevertheless, the exact nature of these conceptualisations and their linguistic expressions do differ from one language to another.

12.2.3 Conceptualisations of *negâh* ‘look’ in Persian

A common usage of the word *negâh* ‘look’ in Persian is associated with expression of emotions of different kinds, such as anger and the active expression of affection. Here are some examples of this usage:

- (44) a. *Negâh-e tond-i beh man kard*
 Look-EZ sharp-ART at me did
 ‘He/she looked at me irascibly (lit. He/she had a sharp look at me).’
 b. *Negâh-e khashmgini beh man andâkht*
 Look-EZ angry at me threw
 ‘He/she cast an angry look at me (lit. He/she threw an angry look at me).’

- c. *Negâh-e por mehr-i be man kard*
 Look-EZ full affection-ART at me did
 ‘She/he gave me an affectionate look
 (lit. He/she gave an affectionate look at me).’
- d. *Negâh-esh âsheghuneh bood*
 Look-his/her amorous was
 ‘His/her look was amorous.’

The above examples clearly reveal that the expression of the eyes can be perceived as an expression of emotion. We should note here that while the word ‘look’ in English may be associated with the whole facial expression, *negâh* in Persian specifically focuses on a person’s eyes and the ways in which they are used to express emotion.

Negâh may also be used to express other things, for example, to give someone a feeling of intellectual inferiority, as in the following sentence:

- (45) *Yek negâh-e âghel-âneh-yi be man kard.*
 One look-EZ wise-mannered-such at me did.
 ‘He/she gave me a look that made me feel intellectually inferior
 (lit. He/she gave me such a wise-mannered look).’

This parallels English expressions like ‘He looked at me like I was stupid’, or ‘He gave me a contemptuous look’. The following section focuses on the expressions of *cheshm* in relation to character traits.

12.3 *Cheshm* and character traits

The body-part term *cheshm* is also associated with a number of character traits in Persian, exemplified in the following expressions:

Persian expression	Literal meaning	Near equivalence in English
a. <i>Cheshm o gush basteh</i>	Ear and eye closed	Naïve
b. <i>Cheshm sefid</i>	Eye white	Wilful, stubborn
c. <i>Cheshm pâk</i>	Eye clean	A man who doesn’t prey on women
d. <i>Cheshm darideh</i>	Eye torn	Rude (usually a girl)

In (a) above, having a closed eye and ear is associated with a lack of worldly experience. This conceptualisation appears to be metonymic, in that the maturity that comes with worldly experience is viewed as leading to open eyes and ears (*cheshm o gush-e bâz* ‘eye and ear open’), or attentiveness, literally, active perception towards what is happening around a person in daily life. In (c) the ‘cleanness’ of the eye is a

cultural conceptualisation (see Chapter 1). In Iran, males who prey on females are culturally condemned and conceptualised as having a ‘dirty’ eye (*cheshm nâ-pâk* ‘eye not-clean’). Thus, refraining from this behaviour is conceptualised as having a ‘clean’ eye. The case of (d) is also another cultural conceptualisation. A girl who shows culturally inappropriate behaviour, like ‘talking back’ to parents or elders, is often called *cheshm darideh* ‘eye torn’.

Cheshm is also associated with greed, conceptualised as ‘having an eye, or greedy eye, on something that others have’, as in the following example:

- (46) *Shohar-esh be mâl-e pedar-esh cheshm dâreh*
 Husband-her to wealth-of father-her eye has
 ‘Her husband is after her father’s wealth
 (lit. Her husband has an eye to her father’s wealth).’

The same sentences could also be used with *cheshm-e tama’* ‘eye of greed’ rather than *cheshm dâsh*t which means the same thing. The basis for this conceptualisation seems to be the thought that ‘one who looks at something, wants it’, as discussed above.

Greed may also be conceptualised in terms of a hungry eye, with a greedy person called *gorosneh cheshm* ‘hungry eye’, or *cheshm gorosneh* ‘eye hungry’. A greedy person may be conceptualised as someone whose stomach is full but whose eye remains hungry as in the following:

- (47) *Shekam-esh sir shodeh, cheshm-esh na*
 Stomach-his/her full has.become eye-his/her not
 ‘He/She is still greedy
 (lit. His/her stomach has become full, but not his/her eye).’

12.4 Other eye-related expressions

Some other meanings in Persian that turn on the use of the eye include the following:

Persian expression	Literal meaning	Near equivalence in English
a. <i>Cheshm pooshidan</i>	Eye covering	Forgive
b. <i>Cheshm beh râh</i>	Eye to road	Anticipate, esp. someone’s arrival
c. <i>Beh cheshm âmadan</i>	To eye come	Appear as sizable/be conspicuous
d. <i>Sarâpâ cheshm</i>	Head.to.foot eye	All eyes
e. <i>Cheshm-tars shodan</i>	Eye-fear become	Becoming cautious as a result of negative experience

In (a) above, the act of forgiving someone is conceptualised as covering one's eyes, and thus overlooking the fault or injury. In (b), anticipation, such as waiting anxiously for someone to arrive, is conceptualised as having an 'eye to the road', which can also be expressed as *cheshm beh dar dookhtan* 'sewing one's eye to the door'. In all the above expressions, there is a metonymic element. In other words, the eye is involved at a literal level in the action described. For example, when waiting for someone, we often look towards the door or at the road in order to catch the first glimpse of their arrival. Similarly, in (d), fully attending to something usually involves a hyperawareness of one's own eyes, which is conceptualised as being eye from head to foot. The English equivalent of the Persian expression (i.e. being all eyes) reflects a similar conceptualisation, although it does not specifically mention the head to foot extent of the coverage. The case of (e) is a frequently used expression that refers to becoming cautious or over-sensitive as a result of a direct (although not necessarily personal) negative experience, as in the following example:

- (48) *Man az.vaghti tasâdof-e barâdar-am ro didam cheshm.tars*
 I since accident-of brother-my DO marker eye.fear
shodam
 have.become
 'I've learned a lesson and have become cautious since I saw my brother's accident (lit. I have become eye-feared since I saw my brother's accident).'

Here, fear has been provoked by witnessing an event and thus the compound *cheshm-tars* foregrounds the conceptualisation, perhaps as a shorthand term for FEARING AS A RESULT OF SEEING.

Persian includes expressions that reflect conceptualisations of *cheshm* as relating to something that one greatly trusts or something that is very highly valued. The following are examples of such usage:

- (49) a. *mesleh chesh.â.m behesh etemâd dâr-am.*
 like eye.PL.my to.him/her trust have-I
 'I trust him very much (lit. I trust him/her like my eyes).'
- b. *mesleh chesh.â.m az.ash morâghebat mikonam*
 like eye.PL.my from.him/her/it look.after do
 'I look after him/her/it very well (lit. I look after him/her like my eyes).'

In (a) above, the speaker likens trust in another person to the degree of trust that he/she has to his/her own eyes. This expression indicates the utmost degree of trust possible. In (b), the speaker promises to look after something/someone as well as he/she would look after her/his own eyes, which suggests a very high degree of commitment.

There are also expressions associating *cheshm* with politeness. For example, *chashm!*, a formal pronunciation of *cheshm*, is a polite way of acceding to a request. This usually takes the following form of exchange:

- (50) *misheh khâheshan in nâneh ro barâ.m post koni?*
 Is.it.possible please this letter DO marker for.me mail do?
 'Could you please mail this letter for me?'

Chashm, hatman
 yes (lit. eye) certainly
 'Yes, certainly.'

A more intense degree and even more polite form of expression of willingness in response to a request is expressed as *beh.rooy-e cheshm* 'upon [my]eye'. Another example of the use of eye in relation to politeness can be found in the following invitation:

- (51) *Ghadam-e-toon beh.rooy-e cheshm*
 Step-of-your upon-of eye
 'You are very welcome (lit. your step be on my eye).'

This expression, which literally means 'May your step be upon my eye!', is usually a welcome given to visitors to the speaker's house, or it may even be used as a farewell. Another politeness formula that employs the eyes is the following utterance, which is a very frequent compliment response:

- (52) *Chesh-mâ-toon ghashang mibineh!*
 Eye-PL-your beautiful see!
 'Your eyes see beautifully!'

This formulaic expression is used to respond to praise such as wearing a nice dress, or having a nice haircut or having a beautiful handwriting, etc. The complete interchange usually takes the following form:

- (53) a. *chesh moble-mâneh ghashangi dêr-i-n!*
 What furniture beautiful have-you-PL
 'What beautiful furniture you have!'
 b. *Chesh-mâ-toon ghashang mibine!*
 Eye-PL-your beautiful see!
 'Your eyes see beautifully!'

In these cases, by identifying the other person's eye as seeing everything beautifully, the compliment recipient uses this formulaic utterance to deflect the compliment reassigning it to the giver of the compliment. This usage is part of politeness ritual and reflects the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* 'modesty', which

encourages recipients of compliments to reject them, play them down, and reassign them to the complimenter or others, including a family member.

12.5 Thinking as seeing

The body-part term *cheshm* does not appear to be associated with *zehn* ‘mind’ and thinking in Persian, and the most common perception related words, *deedan* and *negâh kardan*, are not associated with thinking. However, Persian does have the word *nazar* ‘eyesight’ which is also used to refer to a person’s opinion. It should be noted this word is now so strongly associated with ‘opinion’ that it is losing its reference to eyesight. Currently, the most common Persian word for eyesight is *negâh*, a word which is not, in its everyday usage, commonly associated with thinking. There are also some rather formal Persian words that reflect the conceptualisation of SEEING AS THINKING. The following are examples of such words:

Persian expression	Literal meaning	Near equivalence in English
a. <i>deed</i>	Eyesight	A state of mind, perspective, opinion
b. <i>binesh</i>	Seeing	Vision, insight
c. <i>basirat</i>	Vision	Clear vision, insight
d. <i>jâhanbeeni</i>	Worldview	Worldview
e. <i>negaresh</i>	Seeing	A state of mind, perspective

The word *deed*, which means eyesight, is sometimes used when people refer to the quality and strength of their eyesight, for example, stating that someone has *deed-e ghavi* ‘strong eyesight’. In formal contexts, however, this word may also be used to refer to a state of mind. A person may, for example, ask *deed-e to beh in masaleh chieh?* meaning, ‘What do you think of this issue?’.

The word *binesh* is also mainly used in formal contexts such as academic texts. It has largely lost its literal sense of referring to the act of perception, although the stem of this word, *binâie*, is still used as a formal term to refer to the faculty of eyesight. A derivative of this word, namely, *bebin* ‘look’ is also used in Persian to grab a person’s attention, as in the sense of ‘Look!’ in English. It may also be used to invite someone to take a look at something, as in the following sentence:

- (54) *In naghâshi-e jadeed-am o bebeen*
This painting-EZ new-mine DO marker see
‘Have a look at my new painting.’

The Persian expression *mikhâm bebin-am* (lit. want.I see), which may be used to mean 'I want to know' or 'I want to find out', also reflects conceptualisation of KNOWING IS SEEING. This conceptualisation is, however, limited to this one expression.

The word *basirat* is a borrowing from Arabic and, although it is now used in formal, non-religious contexts too, it originally referred to three categories of religious insight according to the Sufi tradition.³⁶ The word *jahânbeeni* ‘world-view’ appears to be a calque, or loan translation, from English. *Negaresh* presents a noteworthy case in Persian. Although originally the word refers to the act of perception, currently speakers only use it to refer to a state of mind or the way one thinks about an idea, proposition, etc., and in rather formal contexts. Its verb *negaridan* ‘seeing’ is a highly formal word which is hardly ever used in Modern Persian. A historical search, however, traces the etymology of this word back to Pahlavi, the ancient language of the Iranians. The following conjugations of this word are found in *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*:

Nigeridan: negaridan 'to see', *tavajoh kardan* 'to pay attention', *morâghebat kardan* 'to look after', *âzmâyesh kardan* 'to examine, to try', *fekr kardan* 'to think'

Nigeridâr: *negâh konandeh* ‘viewer’, *motovajeh* ‘attentive’, *daghigh* ‘precise’, *fakur* ‘thinker’, *morâgheb* ‘careful/attentive/watchful’

These dictionary entries suggest that in Pahlavi, perception was a basis for the conceptualisations of attention, care and thinking. The principal remnant of the verb *nigeridan* and its conjugations in Modern Persian is *negaresh*, which was mentioned above, can only be used to refer to a state of mind. Persian traditional literature also employs some derivations of this word, for example, *negar kard.am* (lit. saw did.I) meaning 'I saw'. However, this expression is confined to the literary genres in Persian. Thus, it seems that expressions that reflected conceptualisations of thinking as perception have become limited to formal usage in Modern Persian. In falling out of the language everyday use, they have almost all lost their former associations with perception entirely. As mentioned earlier, in contemporary Persian, the body-part 'eye' and the act of perception are far more frequently and strongly associated with feelings, personality traits, attention and knowing, etc., than with thinking. This is also reflected in the following expression, which is used to refer to someone who takes things at face value or who believes things by simply seeing them:

- (55) *aghl.esh* *beh cheshmâsh-e*
ability to reason.his/her to eyes.his/her
'~ he believes what he sees.'

36. <http://www.geocities.com/druidarab/cosmos7.html>

In other words a gullible person is described as having their thinking ability in their eye. This conceptualisation then views a sound ability to reason as something that transcends perception.

12.6 Intuition as perception

The act of perception is also often conceptualised in relation to immediate intuition in Persian. For example, Persian speakers can maintain that they have grasped the true nature of someone after a brief look at them. In this sense, perception is associated with intuition and inspiration. The following examples reveal this usage:

- (56) *Beh yek negâh fahmid-am âdam-e ghâbel-e etemâdi nist*
 With one look realised-I person-EZ worthy-of trust is.not
 ‘With one look, I realised he is not trustworthy.’
- (57) *Bâ hamoon negâh-e aval ehsâs kard-am ensân-e mohtaram-ieh*
 With that look-EZ first feel did-I person-EZ respectable-is
 ‘At first glance I did feel he/she is a respectable person.’

As the speaker gains an intuitive insight into the true character of a person through a brief/first look, these expressions reflect conceptualisation of INTUITION AS PERCEPTION.

12.7 Concluding remarks

In general, the observations made in this chapter about the conceptualisations of *cheshm* ‘eye’ and its related concepts and processes, such as visual perception, provide further evidence for the close interaction between body, culture and language. As in other studies included in similar volumes (e.g. Sharifian, et al., 2008), the findings of this study reveal how speakers of different languages anchor to various parts of their body conceptualisations of their experiences and faculties of various kinds. These conceptualisations are largely culturally constructed and have often their roots in certain belief traditions. Collectively the observations made in such studies point to the role of language as a ‘memory bank’ and ‘archive’, for cultural conceptualisations. As such languages provide a rich resource for the study of conceptualisations of various aspects of human experience such as emotions, thoughts, character traits, etc.

PART VI

Political discourse

Figurative language in international political discourse

The case of Iran

Figurative language is used in all domains of communication, including political discourse. And since figurative language is largely socio-culturally constructed it presents a significant locus for misinterpretation or even manipulation when it collides with the realm of international politics. This chapter presents an analysis of several cases of the use of figurative language, in particular cultural metaphors as a component of cultural conceptualisations, in Iranian political discourse. For example, it shows how transposing a Persian metaphor into an English metaphor has led to a conceptual shift. Given the potential risks involved in misconstruing political discourse internationally, this chapter concludes by calling for additional systematic comparative studies with respect to other languages.

13.1 Introduction

Chandler (2002: 124) maintains that “the conventions of figurative language constitute a rhetorical code, and understanding this code is part of what it means to be a member of the culture in which it is employed”. The use of figurative language is prevalent in all domains of language use including politics. In today’s international arena where the figurative use of language by politicians is immediately rendered into other languages, the socio-cultural situatedness of figurative language gives rise to the possibility of cross-cultural misunderstandings, which have the potential to cause significant damage to international relationships.

This chapter focuses on figurative language encountered in Persian political discourse by exploring first how figures of speech used in the discourse of Iranian politicians are socio-culturally constructed, and how such figurative language has been rendered in English. The chapter starts by providing background discussions on the use of figurative language in politics and then presents an analysis of several cases where translating figurative language from Persian to English has created the potential for significant misunderstandings.

13.2 Figurative language: Literary or ordinary

While traditionally figurative language has largely been associated with the literary use of language it is, in fact, fundamental to all forms of language and thought (e.g. Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). As Chandler (2002:124–125) puts it, “we may think of figurative language as most obviously a feature of poetry and more generally ‘literary’ writing, but there is more metaphor on the street corner than in Shakespeare”. The motivation for the use of figurative language ranges from rendering subtlety and concision to manipulation of thought. There is widespread recognition that figurative language is to a large extent socio-culturally constructed in the sense that its intended interpretation may require socio-cultural knowledge that is more or less shared by members of a particular speech community and cultural group. Even within a society, different social and regional dialects develop their own figurative language and, consequently, often people from outside the speech community miss the nuances of meaning that are associated with the use of particular figures of speech. One of the areas in which the use of figurative language presents both risks and rewards for speakers is political discourse. The following section presents a background on the use of figurative language, in particular the use of metaphor, in political discourse.

13.3 Figurative language and politics

One of the major fields of interest in cognitive linguistics is that of metaphor and figurative language usage, and within the field, much investigation has been undertaken into metaphor in political discourse. While the term ‘political discourse’ has been interpreted variously as encompassing most forms of human interaction (see Chilton, 2004), or only political rhetoric, particular attention has been paid to products of the discourse of politics – for example, speeches, election campaigns, public statements, and the reporting of political activity in the media.

Over the years, particular themes have emerged. In the 1980s, for instance, the political arguments for ‘nuclear proliferation and development’ came under much scrutiny. More recently, attention has been drawn to the political activities of the Bush administration, including responses to the events of September 11, 2001, the preparations and argument for going to war and the historical precedents, and world reactions to these events. Approaches to this topic have been many and varied. Bergen (2003), for instance, analyses political cartoons published in the week after the 2001 attack, exploring the roles played by conceptual blending, conceptual metaphor, and cultural models. In addition, analyses have demonstrated the dominance of the familial metaphor in American politics (e.g.

Adams, 2004; Iyengar, 2005; Lakoff, 1995) and also that of sports and warfare, although these common themes are not restricted to America (Cibulskiene, 2002; Howe, 1987; Rosati, 2000). Other studies have been conducted on the use of specific metaphors in times of war or crisis, for instance, George Bush, Sr's choice of metaphor during the first Gulf War (Bates, 2004), the use of the phrase 'smoking guns' in the search for the existence of 'weapons of mass destruction' in Iraq (Billig & MacMillan, 2005), and Roland Paris' (2002) discussion of Kosovo. The Cold War and the discourse surrounding the European Union (and the European Community) have also been subject to much analysis (e.g. Chilton, 1996; Chilton & Ilyin, 1993).

The role of metaphor has also come under investigation from other perspectives: in his re-evaluation of Hobbes' criticism of rhetoric, Musolf (2006: 22) advocates Hobbes' argument for a "critical attitude towards seemingly unproblematic analogies that lead to dangerous conclusions" – the use of metaphor in politics to deceive, gloss over an issue, or obscure the complexity of an issue. For a detailed, critical analysis of Hobbes, see Chilton (1996). This, like the critical review (Arnold, 2005) of *Metaphorical World Politics* (Beer & De Landtsheer, 2004), in which attention is drawn to both the constitutive power of metaphor and the need for more detailed studies into the politics of metaphor, indicates the continuing investigation into the role that metaphor plays in discourse. Anderson (2002) also calls, albeit cautiously, for metaphors to be considered causal.

Iyengar's (2005) criticism of Lakoff's *Don't Think of an Elephant!* (an extract from *Moral Politics*, Lakoff (1996)) highlights one of the most recent developments in metaphor research, namely the importance of 'framing', and those doing the framing, in political discourse (see also Arnold, 2005). In this respect, the mass media in America now play a major role in political discourse, 'mediating' the message for their audience. Therefore, the core value system politicians may have wanted to elicit is, inevitably, mediated (to whatever end) before it reaches the target audience. This theme is also discussed by Ekström (2001), who investigates the "mediatisation of politics".

The growth of Translation Studies, and the compilation of bilingual and multilingual corpora, has also led to a greater awareness of the importance of translation in political discourse. Christina Schäffner's latest study (2004) calls for interdisciplinary cooperation between Political Discourse Analysis and Translation Studies, offering several convincing examples from data in the German–English bilingual corpus, and also highlighting the implications for political discourse of the translator's choices and strategies, whether personal or imposed, on the final text.

While much of the focus of English-speaking linguistic studies has been directed to the US, attention has also been drawn to Europe, and the European

Union (see especially the corpus studies undertaken by Mihas, 2005; Musolff, 2006; Schäffner, 1997). Comparatively little literature, however, has been produced specifically about metaphor use in other parts of the world.

13.4 Figurative language in Iranian political discourse

The political events of the last three decades in Iran have attracted significant attention from the international media.³⁷ These include the 1979 Islamic revolution, the subsequent engagement of the country in the eight-year war with Iraq and more recently the nuclear issue – the development of so-called ‘weapons of mass destruction’. Due to the Iranian government’s strong opposition to the West, Western politicians and media have been following closely the unfolding of political events inside Iran, and as part of that attention, the discourse of Iranian politicians has come under increasing scrutiny by foreign governments and the media.

One of the areas that has presented a challenge for the non-Iranian media is the frequent use of figurative language by Iranian government officials. For example, from the beginning of the Islamic revolution, its leaders have drawn on a recurring set of metaphors to refer to the United States, including the following:

(58) *Emrikâye jahân-khâr*
America world-eater

(59) *Emrikâye jenâyatkâr*
America criminal

(60) *Sheitân bozorg*
Satan big

The negative force of the metaphors in question is directed toward what are viewed as military acts of aggression on the part of the US. For instance, US invasion of other countries is conceptualised as ‘eating’ in (58) and ‘committing a crime’ in (59). These conceptualisations reflect an underlying conceptual metaphor of COUNTRY/NATION IS A PERSON. The case of (60), on the other hand, reveals a metaphor drawn from the domain of religion, a rhetorical feature of persuasion that has become more prevalent in Iranian political discourse since the Islamic revolution.

It should be noted that US government officials have not been passive recipients of such metaphors, for they, too, have used metaphors to label the Iranian

37. Information on the history of US-Iran relations may prove helpful as a preamble to a better understanding of this section. One possible internet source is: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States-Iran_relations

government. Perhaps the most well known is the expression ‘axis of evil’ that President Bush first brought forth in a speech in 2002 to refer to Iran, Iraq and North Korea. This metaphor combines Reagan’s famous ‘evil empire’ – referring to the former Soviet Union – with a barely veiled reference to the three Axis Powers of WWII. It is a skillful one-to-one mapping of Iran, Iraq and North Korea onto Germany, Italy and the Empire of Japan. The metaphor brings together, albeit indirectly, in a single succinct phrase references to the most formidable enemies that the US faced during the 20th century, and, at the same time, by attaching the word ‘evil’, brings on stage a biblical scenario of ‘good’ versus ‘evil’. Iran has also been said to ‘harbour’ terrorists.³⁸ Such figurative devices, by all parties, are by no means incidental to political discourse, but rather establish or constitute a privileged perspective. The following sections present an analysis of several cases of international media reports concerning Iranian political discourse that include the use of figurative language, or what appears to be figurative language.

13.4.1 “Israel should be wiped off the map”

Since 2005, the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nezhad, has constantly been quoted as having said, “Israel must be wiped off the map”³⁹ or “Israel must be wiped off the face of the earth”.⁴⁰ The section in question of Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nezhad’s speech is reproduced below. It includes his original statement in Persian with the author’s literal glossing of it into English.

- (61) *Va emâm-e aziz mâ farmudand ke in rezhim-e*
 and Imam dear our said-polite.form that this regime
eshghâlgar-e ghods bâyard az safhe-ye ruzegâr mahv gardad.
 occupying Qods has.to from page-of history/time disappear.

In the above excerpt the Iranian president was, in fact, quoting Khomeini, the leader of the Iranian revolution, rather than making a personal statement. Also it is clear that in Persian the statement refers explicitly to the regime, that is, to the current political leadership of Israel, and not to the country of Israel. This shift of focus in the translation reflects conceptualisation of REGIME AS THE NATION/COUNTRY. In a sense the translation here presupposes that the Iranian President in fact equates the regime with the nation/state. Whether this is true or not is irrelevant to the scope of this discussion.

38. <http://www.voanews.com/uspolicy/archive/2003-08/a-2003-08-11-4-1.cfm>

39. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/10/27/wiran27.xml>

40. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/iran/story/0,12858,1601413,00.html>

Also, it is noteworthy that 'history' and 'time' do not have the spatial reference that is captured by 'map' or 'face of the earth'. That is, they refer to 'time' and not 'space'. Furthermore, there is a clear reinterpretation and subsequent slippage that moves from 'the page of history' to another type of paper artefact, namely, a 'map', which does have a spatial aspect and much clearer geo-political connotation. And from there the 'map' morphs into 'the face of the earth'. In this metaphor, disappearance of a regime does not seem to automatically entail the meaning of 'wiping a country off the map', which may imply destroying the whole nation. Interpreted in the context of discourse over Iran's alleged development of nuclear weapons, such translations are very likely to trigger links that lead to terrifying images. Whether or not this is the Iranian President's intention is another issue; the point in question here is the translation of political discourse and the conceptual links and shifts that occur in this process.

It is noteworthy that the conference in which the Iranian president delivered his speech was titled *jahân-e beduneh sahyunism* 'the world without Zionism'. This suggests that the focus of the conference was on the ideology, reflected in the suffix '-ism', rather than the country. However, during his speech his main focus was on the Zionist regime and this suggests a conceptualisation of REGIME AS IDEOLOGY. This is clearly reflected in another part of the same speech where he makes an analogy between a world without Zionism and Iran without the former Pahlavi regime. He states that just as the Iranian people managed to change the Iranian regime, the world could exist without Zionism.

Based on the same speech, the Iranian president has been quoted as referring to Israel as 'a stain', as claimed in the following examples from different media channels and webpages:

- (62) Very Soon, This Stain of Disgrace [i.e. Israel] Will Vanish from the Center of the Islamic World.⁴¹
- (63) [The Iranian president] has called Israel "a stain" on Islam that must be erased.⁴²
- (64) Very soon, Israel, this stain of disgrace, will be purged from the center of the Islamic world.⁴³
- (65) Ahmadinejad described Israel as "a stain of shame that has sullied the purity of Islam," and promised that it would be "cleansed very soon".⁴⁴

41. http://www.defenddemocracy.org/research_topics/research_topics_show.htm?doc_id=312615&attrib_id=7684

42. <http://www.campus-watch.org/article/id/2571>

43. http://www.telospress.com/main/index.php?main_page=news_article&article_id=144

44. <http://www.freemuslims.org/news/article.php?article=1028>

- (66) the new wave of attacks in Palestine will erase this stain from the face of Islam⁴⁵
- (67) And that the State of Israel had become a tumor or a “stain” on the “face of the Islamic world” and should be removed or “wiped off”.⁴⁶

However, the original text from the Iranian president’s speech is glossed as follows:

- (68) *Man tardid na-dâram moj-e jadidi ke dar felestin-e aziz be*
 I doubt not-have wave-of new that in Palestine dear has
râh oftâdeh, mokeh bidâri ke emruz dar donyâ-ye eslâm hast va
 started wave alertness that today in world-of Islam is and
moj-e manaviati ke sartâsareh donyâ-ye eslâm râ farâ gerefteh
 wave-of spirituality that across world-of Islam has spread
be zudi in lakey-e nang râ az dâmâne donyâ-ye eslâm pâk
 soon this stain-of disgrace from skirt world-of Islam clean
khâhad kard, va in shodani-st.
 will do and this possible-is.

In this excerpt, the Iranian president has referred to recent events in Palestine as “sobering waves” and “the waves of spirituality”, and these expressions have been translated as “waves of attack” in (66) above. This seems to be more than a mere translation; it is rather an interpretation of Ahmadi-Nezhad’s figurative language.

Also, the antecedent for “this stain of disgrace” is “the regime occupying Qods”, which appears in the preceding sentence in the original text, rather than “the State of Israel” as the reports quoted in (63)–(68) entail. The translation again reflects conceptualisation of REGIME AS THE NATION/COUNTRY.

Examined more closely, the idiomatic expression “stain of disgrace on skirt”, which the Iranian president introduces at this juncture, is originally a metonymy standing for ‘stain on a girl’s skirt as a sign of being raped’. Metaphorically it is usually brought into play when a member of a family or an associate has done something that is considered as staining the reputation of, or causing loss of face to, the family or group. In such cases, the members of the family or group may distance themselves from the person who has brought ‘shame’ or disgrace to them. The expression, thus, is not usually used to refer to someone or something outside the group, but rather to someone who is an ‘insider’. Also, the use of this idiomatic expression does not suggest the literal act of ‘removing’ or killing the

45. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article.jsp?id=3&debateId=128&articleId=2974>

46. <http://www.antiwar.com/prather/?articleid=8458>

person who is regarded as a 'stain', but, for example, divorcing the spouse who has 'stained the skirt' of the family. Thus, the relevance of this figurative expression to the Israeli regime is not clear to this author, but it is clear that the violence implied in English-language interpretations of this figure of speech is not explicitly reflected in the original.

Interpreted from a Western perspective, literally speaking, anything which is considered as a 'stain' would need to be removed or cleansed. It can be seen that the translated versions of the Iranian president's reference to 'stain' have included 'cleanse', 'erase from the face', 'purge' and 'vanish'. In the case of (68) above, the Persian expression has even been rendered as 'tumor'; no doubt everyone would associate 'tumor' with 'removal'. This seems to be a move to a whole new conceptual field, that is, 'illness', 'deadly disease' and the semantic prototype of 'cancer'. Also, the Iranian president does not seem to have either 'mandated' or 'promised' the removal of the stain, contrary to what appears in the translations of his speech. Another phenomenon in this context is a blending that is produced by conflating the two previous sections on 'stain' and 'map', as in the following excerpt taken from the Internet which is presented as a direct quote from the same speech:⁴⁷

The esteemed president said: 'Israel is a humiliating stain that must be erased off the map. There is no doubt that the new wave of attacks in Palestine will soon erase this stain from the face of the Islamic world.'

It is clear that this example is really a pseudo-citation, a gloss consisting of careful selection and juxtaposition of words from the Iranian president's speech, presented as a direct quote. Here the 'stain' and 'off the map' have been merged into one sentence while the meaning of the original expression 'the waves in Palestine' has been militarised by the addition of 'attacks'. I should reiterate that the analysis presented here is not an examination of the Iranian President's political position but a comparison between what a politician has been quoted as having said, and what he has actually said.

No doubt the translations found in Persian newspapers who quote foreign government officials in translation could be subjected to similar kinds of analysis, and would require a systematic comparison of the metaphoric repertoire brought to bear in the Persian language translations with the ones encountered in the original.

47. <http://antichomsky.blogspot.com/2005/10/shocker-out-of-iran.html>

13.4.2 To inflict US with “harm and pain”

In March 2006, Western media such as the *Telegraph Newspaper* (UK) announced an Iranian threat against the US, as follows:

Tehran threatens to inflict ‘harm and pain’ on US over nuclear row.

Iran issued a chilling threat to inflict “harm and pain” on America yesterday as it headed for confrontation at the United Nations Security Council over its suspected nuclear weapons programme.⁴⁸

Upon further reading of the above report it becomes clear that the statement was originally issued in English and not in Persian, by Ali Asghar Soltanieh, the Iranian ambassador to the IAEA. The use of the expression “chilling threat” suggests that the statement by the Iranian official was interpreted as Iran threatening to attack the US, perhaps alluding even to a nuclear confrontation, given the fact that at the time Iran was allegedly developing ‘weapons of mass destruction’. Very soon many foreign media highlighted the frightening news, as in the following headlines:

(69) Iran Threatens ‘Harm and Pain’ to U.S.⁴⁹

(70) Tehran warns Washington of ‘harm and pain’⁵⁰

The original English message from the Iranian official is as follows:

The United States has the power to cause harm and pain, but the United States is also susceptible to harm and pain. So if that is the path that the US wishes to choose, let the ball roll.⁵¹

It is first of all noteworthy that attributing what the Iranian official has said to “Tehran” and “Iran” is a case of surfacing the following metaphors/metonymies:

- A. A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL IS THE GOVERNMENT
- B. THE CAPITAL CITY IS THE GOVERNMENT
- C. THE COUNTRY IS THE GOVERNMENT
- D. THUS, A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL IS THE COUNTRY
- E. THE COUNTRY IS A PERSON

48. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/03/09/wiran09.xml>

49. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/03/08/world/main1381121.shtml>

50. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/6d715dcc-af11-11da-b04a-0000779e2340.html>

51. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/03/08/world/main1381121.shtml>

Metaphors (A) to (D) are reflected in the fact that the Iranian government official appeared as “Iran” and “Tehran” in the news headlines quoted above. Also, (E) is reflected in conceptualising ‘country’ or ‘capital’ as an entity that is capable of ‘threatening’, ‘warning’, and even ‘saying’ something, all of which are very common conceptualisations in political discourse.

Also, it appears that it is the “susceptibility of the US to harm and pain” and the phrase “let the ball roll”, which had led to interpretations of ‘threat’ against the US. The verbatim translation of this expression into Persian does not appear to lead to a common expression in current use. The closest expressions in Persian would be *zarar va ziân* meaning ‘sustain a loss’ and *dard va ranj* (lit., pain and suffering) literary meaning ‘suffering and hardship’.

The Persian translation of the Iranian official’s statement as it appeared in *Etelâât* newspaper reads as follows:

- (71) *Âmricâ ghodrat-e lâzeme barâye sadame-zadan va ijâdeh dard dêrad,*
 America strength-of needed for harm and create pain has
amâ in keshvar mostaede sadame khordan va dard keshidan ast
 but this country susceptible to.be harmed and pain suffer is
va agar âmricâ be donbâle in masir ast pas bogzârim tâ in
 and if America after this direction is then let’s let this
charkh be hamin ravâl becharkhad.
 wheel as it is turn.

As mentioned above, the rendering of ‘harm and pain’ into Persian (i.e. *Sadameh zadan va dard keshidan*) does not appear as a common Persian expression and it is highly likely that the Iranian official was responding to a statement by the US ambassador to the United Nations, John R. Bolton, who warned Iran of “painful consequences”, in relation to a threat to withdraw/withhold oil.⁵² It should be added here that “let the ball roll” in English means ‘let something start happening’, but the above Persian translation suggests ‘keep things as they are’. The issue of ‘harm and pain’ did not end here, for the media made every effort to find out exactly what the Iranian official meant by these words. Eventually when he was questioned about the precise meaning of his words, he replied as follows:

- QUESTION: What do you mean by harm and pain?
 ANSWER: We are not going to act, our reaction would depend on the action.
 Then we will decide after careful study.⁵³

52. See more at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/03/05/AR2006030500992.html>

53. <http://www.comeclean.org.uk/articles.php?articleID=176>

It can be seen that on this occasion, 'harm' and 'pain' are associated with 'act', which may be interpreted as 'military act'. But the Iranian official adds, after a few other questions, that:

"the important thing is we have no intention of confrontation. Two parties are needed for any conflict. We are determined to settle this peacefully and welcome any gesture. We are warning and advising the other side to not escalate this situation."

The above quote does not suggest any direct threat of a military attack. In fact, one website makes reference to an interpretation held by some diplomats which is as follows:

Diplomats accredited to the meeting and in contact with the Iranians said the statement [harm and pain] could be a veiled threat to use oil as an economic weapon.⁵⁴

Here, 'oil' enters the domain of figurative language as OIL AS WEAPON, which can inflict 'harm' and 'pain'. It has even become common to use the expression 'oil weapon'.⁵⁵

13.4.3 US deserves a punch in the mouth

One of the expressions that has become a cliché in post-revolutionary Iranian political discourse is that of 'a punch in the mouth'. For example, in May 2005, the international media reported a quote from the Iranian spiritual leader, as follows:

Iran issues nuclear warning to US

Speaking on a tour of south-east Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei said the US was arrogant, rude and deserved a punch in the mouth. He also said Iran's presidential elections in June would not make any difference to its nuclear policy. The US has expressed fears Iran is trying to build nuclear weapons.

Enrichment warning

Ayatollah Khamenei said it was not up to the US to decide which countries needed nuclear technology. He also warned that Iran's forthcoming presidential elections were nothing to do with the Americans. No president would dare violate the country's national interests because the people would not allow it, he said.

54. <http://www.breitbart.com/news/2006/03/08/D8G7JAPG1.html>

55. http://www.iranian.ws/iran_news/publish/article_16643.shtml

His comments came as Iran warned on Saturday it might resume suspended enrichment-related activities next week in defiance of an agreement that is underpinning nuclear talks with Europe. Iran is concerned that negotiations are dragging on too long and has proposed a phased resumption of its nuclear activities.⁵⁶

As can be seen, the expression “deserved a punch in the mouth” is viewed by the BBC as a warning of a possible nuclear attack against the US, as reflected in the title of the newspaper report. This interpretation is likely to have been based on the conceptualisation of NUCLEAR ATTACK AS INDIVIDUAL PHYSICAL CONFLICT. That is, if a nuclear attack is conceptualised as individual physical conflict then it follows that a punch in the mouth implies military action. Again, given the circumstances around the issue of Iran’s so-called ‘nuclear weapons’, this background frame implying a potential military conflict makes it easy and convenient to establish the links that are needed to interpret a ‘punch in the mouth’ as a ‘nuclear warning’. This is evident in the following quote from the “War on Jihad” website:

Speaking on a tour of southeast Iran, Khomeini said the US ‘deserved a punch in the mouth.’ From where does this brashness come? It comes from Iran’s plans to launch an Electro-Magnetic Pulse Nuclear war against the USA and Europe, crippling the West in the War on terror.⁵⁷

However, there is another side to this story. The expression ‘punch in the mouth’ entered the Iranian political discourse when Imam Khomeini returned to Iran from exile in February 1979. Upon his arrival he delivered a speech where he made the following statement:

(72) *Man tuye dahan-e in dolat mizanam, man khodam*
 I to mouth-of this government hit, I myself
dolat tashkil midam.
 government establish.

By this statement, the leader of the revolution meant that he would not recognise the government of the time (Shapour Bakhtiar’s government)⁵⁸ as legitimate, and that he would establish his own government. Thus, the implied meaning of ‘punch in the mouth’ was ‘not recognise as legitimate’ and of course it has the added implication of an attempt to overthrow the existing government, one that is therefore viewed as illegitimate. However, in time this expression became a standard metaphor in Iranian political discourse where it acquired meanings ranging from

56. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4503915.stm

57. <http://www.waronjihad.com/4thmay2005.html>

58. For further information go to <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/irtoc.html>

‘resistance’ to ‘rejection (of a proposal)’. This is, for example, reflected in the following quote from an Iranian paint company owner, found on a webpage:

Last year a company run by a friend of mine produced a mural listing a number of goods produced in Israel and saying: ‘By boycotting these products, let’s give a punch in the mouth to Israel.’⁵⁹

It can be seen that boycotting a product is here viewed as “giving a punch in the mouth” to Israel. Another revealing example that surfaced as Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nezhad was taking office after winning the election in 2005 is the following from the GlobalSecurity.org website:

Ahmadinejad’s supporters said he ‘will punch in the mouth’ all those who advocate relations with the United States. Rafsanjani had said in campaign interviews that he would seek to improve Iran’s troubled relationship with the United States. Ahmadinejad represents a younger generation whose formative experience was the Iran-Iraq War.⁶⁰

Here, the supporters of Mr Ahmadi-Nezhad used the expression ‘punch in the mouth’ to suggest that he would refuse to establish relationships with the US, a position which would not impress his predecessors who were open to developing relationships with the US. Thus, overall, it should be clear that ‘punch in the mouth’ has become a common figure of speech in Iranian political discourse, referring to any form of existence, disagreement, rejection, etc., and that it does not necessarily imply any real act of physical violence.

In the context of Ayatollah Khamenei’s use of this expression as directed against the US, it seems to suggest resisting interference by the US. The official website of the Ayatollah Khamenei contains an excerpt from the speech where he first used the expression ‘punch in the mouth’ (*bar dahân-e oo* [US] *mosht miku-bim*, lit., ‘to mouth of him/her punch hit’). That section is translated into English as follows:

U.S. officials are so shameless and impudent as to say that Iran does not need nuclear energy! This matter is none of their business! They have no right to say that the Iranian nation should not make use of nuclear energy.⁶¹

It can be seen that on the website the expression ‘punch in the mouth’ has not been literally translated into English and it is clear that this section does not include any explicit statement about nuclear threats. The Iranian spiritual leader’s

59. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/iran/story/0,,1705211,00.html>

60. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iran/ahmadinejad.htm>

61. <http://www.khamenei.ir/EN/Speech/detail.jsp?id=20050501B>

speech explicitly concerns the US's interference in Iran's affairs, specifically, Iran's attempts to produce nuclear energy. It does not discuss or overtly imply launching an attack against the US.

13.5 Concluding remarks

Overall, the analyses presented in this chapter have developed the following position: since language is socio-culturally and politically situated, the use and translation of figurative language in international political discourse may lead to considerable risks or produce substantial rewards, depending on the context of translation. In today's increasingly globalised and media-dominated world where the destinies of the nations are intertwined and repeatedly woven together by means of this international political discourse, it is obvious that extreme caution needs to be exercised when translating and interpreting figurative language from one language to another. Of course, this statement assumes that the goal of those involved in this process is not to deliberately manipulate language in order to distort the picture and justify certain actions. For example, the metaphorical leap from a 'spokesman' to a 'nation' or its 'capital' can be used to justify disastrous actions. Of particular importance here is the process of 'recontextualisation' and therefore the reformulation of meaning brought about by the media (whether by conscious manipulation or unconscious complicitness on the part of the media outlets).

Finally, I would like to make it clear that the analyses presented in this chapter are not meant to develop or express a political position or support a political stance. The goal of the discourse analysis undertaken has not been to explore the real intentions of the Iranian politicians; rather, it is an attempt to bring into view the importance of careful linguistic and conceptual analysis in discussions of the use/misuse of figurative language in international political discourse. It is obvious that the case of Iran is just one example and not a particularly exceptional one. Given the significance of the consequences that may derive from these sorts of uncontextualised translations, similar socio-culturally situated studies of other languages appear to be absolutely essential.

Politics and/of translation

Case studies between Persian and English

This chapter seeks to highlight some of the complexities involved in translating key concepts in international politics. By examining how concepts such as ‘concession’, ‘compromise’ and ‘jihad’ may be rendered into Persian, the chapter shows how these culturally constructed concepts are subject to significant influence from the socio-political contexts in which they are used. It is also observed that semantic shift or expansion associated with these terms over a period of time may be socio-politically motivated. The observations made in this chapter show that there is an urgent need for a systematic exploration of the conceptual basis of the terminology regularly employed in the discourse of international politics. It goes without saying that mistakes in translating such socioculturally loaded conceptualisations could have unintended consequences that, in turn, could bring about damage to human life and spirit.

14.1 Introduction

The role of language in international negotiation cannot be overestimated. The process of negotiation largely involves clarifying certain concepts and coming to a consensus over the understanding and use of certain terms. Cohen (2001:67) observes that:

When negotiation takes place across languages and cultures the scope for misunderstanding increases. So much of negotiation involves arguments about words and concepts that it cannot be assumed that language is secondary and all that “really” counts is the “objective” issues at stake.

Language is employed by speakers to relate their conceptualisations of experiences rather than describe an ‘objective’ reality. Semantic and pragmatic differences across different languages are largely rooted in different conceptualisations of the world. As has been shown, these culturally constructed conceptualisations of experience are not fixed templates for guiding thought and behaviour, but rather are constantly negotiated across time and space among the members of a cultural group.

One of the contexts in which the above-made observation becomes important is when people attempt to translate from one language into another, such as for the purpose of international negotiation (see also Baker, 2006; Cohen, 1997; Hatim & Mason, 1990). If languages largely encode the ways in which their speakers conceptualise their experiences, then it is very likely that in the process of translation, attempts are made to express sets of words in ways that capture different conceptualisations of experience (see Avruch & Wang, 2005). As Cohen (2001: 69) states, “[w]ords and their translations are not just interchangeable labels denoting some given, immutable feature of the world but keys opening the door onto different configurations of the world” [emphasis added]. I would like to add here that words, as well as the conceptualisations that they instantiate, may also be exposed to influences emanating from the socio-political environments in which they are used. That is, apart from the effect of culture on our conceptualisations of experiences, which are captured by the semantic and pragmatic aspects of human languages, the meaning(s) of words may also be shaped by the socio-political contexts in which they are employed, especially when they are used over and over again in the same socio-political context. This chapter illustrates/elaborates on this thesis/position by providing examples based on the translation of a number of terms used in international politics from Persian into English and vice versa.

14.2 Concession and compromise

Two words pivotal to international negotiation are ‘concession’ and ‘compromise’. Cohen (2001:81) notes that “compromise and concession are inseparable from negotiating in the English-speaking world”, and argues that equivalents for these terms are absent in Arabic, Persian and Turkish. However, in his contention he mainly focuses on Arabic and Turkish. In this section I will briefly examine the recent trends in the use of these concepts in English in the context of international negotiation and will also present an analysis of attempts to translate the same terms into Persian.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines ‘concession’ as “something that you allow or do, or allow sb to have, in order to end an argument or to make a situation less difficult”. The following statement shows an example of the usage of the word ‘concession’ in this sense:

The government has made a concession by allowing 580 plot-holders to renew their contracts. (Institute for War and Peace Reporting)

It should be noted that in contemporary English the conceptualisation captured by the word ‘concession’ provides a culturally constructed schema which places

an individual, or a party, in control of affairs and gives them the authority to grant certain rights to others, even when this action could be construed as detrimental to their cause, or even a sign of weakness, a loss to their side. If the authority or frame of reference for the course of action undertaken is believed to derive from a divine source, then any degree of ‘concession’ may be conceptualised as ‘morally untenable’ or even ‘sacrilege’.

The *Aryanpour English-Persian Dictionary*, which is one of the most reliable dictionaries, translates ‘concession’ into Persian as: *emtiâz* ‘advantage’, *etmiâz-e enhesâri* ‘exclusive advantage’ and *e ’tâ* ‘grant, donate’. The following are examples of how these words may be used in Persian:

In moâmeleh barâyehe ânha yek emtiâz mahsoub.mishavad.
This deal for them one advantage counts.
‘This deal counts as an advantage for them.’

Ou zaminhâyehe khod râ beh mardom e’tâ kard.
He/she lands his/her DO marker to people grant-PAST.
‘He/she granted/donated his/her land to people.’

Clearly the definition of ‘concession’ provided by *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* is not reflected in its entirety in the Persian translations. Rather, the renderings in Persian suggest ‘granting an advantage’ without providing any rationalisation for the action as is found in English, that is, ‘to end an argument or to make a situation less difficult’. It might be suggested that the solution to this lack of translation equivalent is to translate the word ‘concession’ into a sentence. I maintain that the very core conceptualisation that is captured by the English word ‘concession’ would appear negative in contexts where the basis for the action is predetermined by religious precepts. Thus, no matter how one translates terms such as ‘concession’ into Persian, for example, as a single word, a paraphrase or a sentence, they would still be negatively construed if what one is allowing another party or person to have or to do would be in conflict with one’s religious beliefs.

Turning to the case of ‘compromise’, the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the term as:

- n. 1: a: settlement of differences by arbitration or by consent reached by mutual concessions b: something intermediate between or blending qualities of two different things
- 2: a concession to something derogatory or prejudicial <a compromise of Principles>
- v. transitive senses
- 1: *obsolete* to bind by mutual agreement
- 2: to adjust or settle by mutual concessions
- 3: a: to expose to suspicion, discredit, or mischief

- b: to reveal or expose to an unauthorised person and especially to an enemy <confidential information was *compromised*>
- c: to cause the impairment of <a *compromised* immune system>
- <a seriously *compromised* patient>

v. intransitive senses

- 1: a: to come to agreement by mutual concession
- b: to find or follow a way between extremes
- 2: to make a shameful or disreputable concession <wouldn't *compromise* with their principles>

The word 'compromise' is translated by the Aryanpour Dictionary into Persian as *tarâzi* 'balance', *mosâleheh* 'settlement', *tavâfogh* 'agreement' and *tasviah kardan* 'to clear [e.g. an account]'. It can be seen that the Persian translations mainly capture the 'settlement' and 'agreement' components of 'compromise' without implying the intended mutual concession outcome. The rendering of 'compromise' into *tasviah kardan* 'to clear' does not seem to correspond to any of the senses of the English word 'compromise'. The verb *tasviah kardan* in Persian, usually used in the phrase *hesâb tasviah kardan*, implies a sense of revenge, particularly when it is used in conflict situations.

The argument here needs to move beyond the case of a language not having a particular word or concept. The real issue is how the conceptualisation indexed by a word is perceived by the speakers of the language in a particular context. As previously shown, when the moral principles guiding a specific course of action are rooted in a belief system, such as that of religion, then any 'giving up'⁶² may be construed as 'turning one's back' on the belief system in question. In particular, where the government is guided by a shared belief that their motivation comes from a divine source, it would seem only natural for any decision made by government officials to reflect the underlying religious component, the basis and construction of moral principles. Therefore any 'concession' in such contexts may be construed as 'deviation' from divine prescription.

It is noteworthy that the meanings associated with the contemporary usage of the word 'compromise' in American English range from a rather positive one to ones that are clearly negative, that is, from the Western perspective. However, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (first and second editions) provides seven major meanings for 'compromise' as a noun, out of which only the last one implies a negative sense in Western varieties of English and that is where it is defined as 'a putting in peril or hazard, endangering, exposure to risk or suspicion'. The other meanings

62. The *Oxford Advanced Dictionary* defines "compromise" as "an agreement made between two people or groups in which each side gives up some of the things they want so that both sides are happy at the end".

basically suggest mutual concession without implying that the act would incur any negative consequences, as interpreted from a Western secular perspective. These definitions appear to recognise the rights of both parties involved in a situation as having equal value. The dictionary provides eight basic meanings for the verb 'compromise', of which only the last one carries a negative valence in Western varieties of English.

The results of a comparison between the abovementioned entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and those in the current version of the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* suggest that there has been a semantic extension of the meanings associated with 'compromise' in the direction of negative realisations. Also, a comparison of the entry for 'compromise' in the third edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (1974) with that of the seventh edition reveals that the latter has an additional meaning of "compromise (on sth): to do something that is against your principles or does not reach the standards that you have set". This is clearly a negative meaning, which is absent in the earlier version of the dictionary. The positive connotations of 'compromise' hearken back to the secular foundations of the Western democracies and link to the beliefs promulgated by classical liberalism of the nineteenth century. It was a view that elevated the status of the individual and promoted the notion of contractual relations between 'free agents', commerce, etc.

Similarly, a close analysis of the use of the term 'compromise' in recent years in the context of global political debates reveals that the term has rather increasingly been applied with a negative connotation. Even the *Dictionary of Diplomacy's* definition of 'compromise' as "an agreement reached by negotiation in which each party surrenders a portion of its preferred outcome" (Berridge & James, 2003: 47), implies a rather negative sense in that it is predicated on the charged notion of 'surrender', which sets up the frame of 'war'. An online article entitled "Ex-president Bill wants to Clean Up the Word 'Compromise'" reports on a speech delivered by Bill Clinton touching upon the Middle East peace process. The article reports:

Clinton's most passionate moment by far came as he urged those involved in the process to stop considering the word "compromise" a dirty word. His words seemed to be directed more towards the Palestinians than the Israelis. (Atia)

However, it seems that the US government itself has continued to construe the meaning of the word 'compromise' in the negative sense of 'backing down' and 'giving in'. This is evident in many websites in which George Bush and other US government officials are quoted, for example, as saying: "US will not compromise on Iraqi weapons inspections"; "the US will not compromise its long-term plans", or "the US will not compromise on the sanctions issue". It seems that such narrow construals have rather 'contaminated' the earlier understanding of the 'spirit of compromise'.

In general, the direction of meaning change in the case of ‘compromise’, from a rather positive to a negative notion, reflects a shift in the discourse style of many governments as they move away from conceptualising the basis of their actions as secular-political, towards a religious-based morality. This is for instance reflected in Bush’s reference to divine missions in his political discourse.

An interesting observation in regard to the word ‘compromise’ is its recent use in the English version of the position statements made by some Iranian government officials. This is despite the fact that earlier in this chapter it was stated that Persian does not have a complete equivalent for ‘compromise’. A Google search for the phrase ‘Iran will not compromise’ yielded many pages in which the exact phrase was used. Most of these websites reported on Iran’s position in the context of developing nuclear technology. The following are examples of this usage:

- a. Iran will not compromise on nuclear know-how.
- b. Iran will not compromise its right to pursue a peaceful nuclear program.
- c. Iran will not compromise on its right to nuclear technology.
- d. Iran will not compromise over its legitimate rights including access to peaceful nuclear technology.

The use of the English word ‘compromise’ by the Iranian government appears to be a recent development. The term seems to have been adopted by Iranian government officials, or their interpreters, in response to the use of the term by Western governments. In the usages by the Iranian government officials, the word ‘compromise’ appears to have been used as a translation of concepts such as *sâzesh* ‘put up with’, *dast bar dâshtan* ‘cease’ (lit. take its hand from) or *aghab neshini kardan* ‘to withdraw from a position’, because in the government reports that are released in Persian, the government officials usually use these phrases in the context of dealing with US proposals, such as the following:

Irân az hoghugheh teknolozhi-e hasteyi-e khod dast bar nakhâhad dâsht.
 Iran from rights technology nuclear its own will not cease
 ‘Iran will not give up its nuclear-technology rights.’

Such statements are now increasingly being translated as ‘Iran will not compromise (on) its nuclear technology’. In general, the observations made so far in this chapter reveal how terms that capture culturally constructed conceptualisations can take on special significance when aligned to socio-political as well as religious influences.

14.3 Jihad

'Jihad' is probably the most discussed term in current debates in international negotiation and international politics. The *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* (<http://www.m-w.com/>) defines the term as follows:

- 1: a holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty; *also*: a personal struggle in devotion to Islam especially involving spiritual discipline
- 2: a crusade for a principle or belief

In terms of etymology, the term 'jihad' is a borrowing from Arabic into English, and also into Persian. When viewed from a broad historical perspective, the conceptualisations associated with the word 'jihad' in Islam are indeed very complex and therefore exceed the scope of this chapter (see Bonney, 2004). As an indication of this complexity, a Google search for the English phrase 'the word jihad' yielded 794 pages in which the complete phrase was used. With this in mind, the scope of the current discussion is relatively modest in terms of its historical focus, and will concentrate on charting the development of this term in Persian starting with the period before the Islamic revolution, which took place in 1979, and continuing to the present day.

Prior to the revolution, the term 'jihad', which is pronounced as 'jahâd' in Persian, was employed by the pioneers of the revolution to remind people that overthrowing Pahlavi's regime was a jihad, in the sense of 'holy war', and therefore every Muslim in the country had the duty to take part in it. Pahlavi's regime was viewed as a threat to Islam, due to its Western orientation, and thus it was every Muslim's religious obligation to join the revolutionists in their struggle to replace the regime with an Islamic government.

After the revolution, it was the Islamic government itself that in a certain sense triggered a semantic shift in the word 'jihad'. Concretely, it was Imam Khomeini, the leader of the revolution, who first used the term *jahâd-e sâzandegi* 'jihad of construction' in 1979 in a message in which he invited the people of Iran to cooperate in reconstructing the country after the revolution. Following this message a ministry was formed in 1983 with the title of *Vezârat-e Jahâd-e Sâzandegi* 'Ministry of Jihad of Construction'. One of the fundamental objectives of the establishment of the Ministry was set out as follows:

To move towards the country's independence and self-sufficiency and to improve social and economic conditions of villages and nomadic regions by developing agriculture, animal husbandry, rural industries, and through reconstructing ruins in collaboration with governmental administrative bodies and participation of people from all walks of life.

("Jihad Striving for Development and Construction")

Thus, it can be seen that the word *jahâd* in Persian took on a rather new meaning after the revolution, that is, ‘striving’ associated with construction and development rather than destruction and war. With the Ministry’s active involvement in the Iran-Iraq war, however, the term started to be used in association with the military, but not necessarily with a negative valence, again, as reflected in the Ministry’s achievement list below:

- Jihad-e-Sazandegi used to collect the people’s aids, send them to war fronts, and distribute them in battlefields.
- Jihad-e-Sazandegi took active part in all the phases of military operations, and played a major role in gaining victory, stabilizing and protecting the military positions.
- Moreover, Jihad-e-Sazandegi designed and carried out very important and strategic projects in the field of army.

(“Jihad Striving for Development and Construction”)

In 1990, the Iranian Government decided to transfer some of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Jihad of Construction to *vezârat-e keshâvarzi* ‘the Ministry of Agriculture’. The Ministry of Jihad of Construction was now responsible for issues related to “conservation, rehabilitation, expansion, and exploitation of natural resources (forests, rangelands, and fisheries), watershed management, improvement of rural industries, and rural water-supply” (“Jihad Striving for Development and Construction,”). Some seven years later the Ministry of Jihad of Construction merged into the Ministry of Agriculture and the new Ministry was labelled ‘the Ministry of Jihad of Agriculture’, wrongly translated by the Ministry’s website as ‘the Ministry of Agriculture of Jihad’.

Both the termination of the war and the merging of the Ministry of Jihad of Construction into the Ministry of Agriculture once again redirected the meaning of the word *jahâd* towards ‘striving’ for development and construction, rather than towards a military war/warfare. Associated with these terms was the use of phrases such as *jahâd-e tose`e* ‘Jihad of development/expansion’, which reinforce the positive and constructive senses of the word. With the initiation of the Iranian Cultural Revolution (1980–87), the term *jahâd-e dâneshgâhi* ‘jihad of the university/tertiary education’ was also coined to refer to the campaign for gaining academic independence for the country’s tertiary education.

Thus, it is clear that the conceptualisations associated with the word *jahâd* in Persian have varied, depending on the contexts in which they have been used. It is also clear how government agendas as well as socio-political conditions of the country have influenced the way in which the term has been utilised. Nonetheless, for many Iranians the term *jahâd*, in its contemporary usage, is clearly associated

with conceptualisations that embody the notions of construction, development, expansion, campaign and striving, rather than with civil destruction and war.

In the attempts that have been made to translate the term *jahâd* into English directly from Persian, one finds that a certain amount of semantic variation in the choices made. For example, some authors have made all usages of the term equivalent to 'crusade', such as 'Academic Crusade' for *jahâd-e dâneshgâhi* 'Jihad of the university/ tertiary education', or 'agriculture crusade' for *jahâd-e keshâvarzi* 'Jihad of agriculture'. Other translations of the word include 'holy war' such as in 'University holy war' for *jahâd-e dâneshgâhi* 'Jihad of the University' and 'corps' such as 'Construction corps' for *jahâd-e sâzandegi* 'construction jihad'. All these translations appear to be based on Persian-English bilingual dictionaries. In this respect, an interesting point to keep in mind is that in some cases the title of the *vezârat-e Jahâd-e keshâvarzi* 'Ministry of Construction' Jihad is abbreviated to 'the Ministry of Jihad'. For instance, this was used to describe the affiliation of an academic in an international conference. I would leave it to the readers of this chapter to imagine the aims and activities that might be attributed to this 'Ministry of Jihad', given the Western perception of the latter term, and most particularly in light of the discourse concerning the 'war on terror'.

Finally, it should be noted that the observations made in this chapter suggest that word meanings respond to and can be shaped by concrete socio-political and cultural factors more or less instantly, especially in our age of instant communication. A change in meaning that might have taken a century to spread through a speech community can now be accomplished in a month – for example, the introduction of a new term or idiom. The last two decades have witnessed exemplary cases where socio-political factors and agendas motivated a rather accelerated shift, or extension, in the meanings of words such as 'terrorism', 'war' and 'weapon'. In this context, the role of speech writers, especially those of world leaders, should also be acknowledged as they often take the liberty to exploit language to achieve hidden agendas and perhaps even to serve certain economic agents (see, for example, Gelderman, 1997).

14.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter has explored some of the myriad complexities involved in translating terms that are commonly found in the discourse of international politics. The analysis of the specific cases treated here reveals how the cultural and socio-political circumstances in which certain terms are contextualised may lead to a

rapid semantic shift or semantic extension. In other words, the specific cultural and socio-political contexts in which a word is repeatedly brought into play will have implications for how it is eventually interpreted.

I have also tried to reveal how rendering the concepts commonly encountered in the discourse of international politics, translating them from one language into another, may involve a shift in the ideological as well as the socio-political underpinnings of the concepts themselves, since they are (re-)contextualised in different ways and, therefore, have different histories. In summary, this chapter demonstrates, once again, how language, and meanings in particular, are influenced by the commitments of the individuals and agencies that employ them as well as by the more globalised macro-level contexts in which they are used. If international politics is aimed at reconciliation, greater attention needs to be paid to the role of language and conceptualisation, particularly in negotiating processes aimed at conflict resolution and related debates currently taking place around the world. Translators and interpreters can contribute very considerably to international negotiation by unpacking some of the underlying complexities that characterise the use of key concepts in this crucial domain.

Final words

The initial chapters of this book were dedicated to the presentation of a new theoretical framework which attempts to ground language in cultural conceptualisations and cultural cognition. Collectively, the theoretical chapters call for serious scrutiny of language as a system of conceptualisations with a significant cultural basis. In both the theoretical and applied sections of the book, I have presented linguistic data that show how language can be studied as a site for a new kind of research and how many aspects of languages that are ensconced in cultural cognition can be unpacked. I have also made an attempt to demonstrate how, through examining various features of human languages, cognition as a group-level phenomenon can be explored. I argue that until now linguistic analysis has been very much underutilised in studies of the interface between culture and cognition. Hopefully the theoretical framework and accompanying materials presented in this volume will help open the door to additional work in this area.

I have also tried to show how explorations of cultural conceptualisations can benefit from and contribute to areas of applied language study, such as intercultural communication, cross-cultural pragmatics, World Englishes, political discourse analysis, and English as an International Language. I firmly believe that the investigation of data from a greater number of languages, language varieties, and various contexts of language use will enrich our understanding of the intricate relationship between language, cognition and culture. Indeed, when analysed from the perspective of cultural conceptualisations, data from applied domains can shed direct light on our more theoretical understanding of the nature of the language and its grounding in cultural cognition. In short, I argue for a much more substantial role for linguistics and applied linguistics in studies concerned with the nexus between culture and cognition. Furthermore, I believe the material presented in this book outlines how this process might proceed. Various languages and language varieties can, I believe, act as 'archaeological sites'. These in turn can be explored in terms of this new theoretical framework, one which gives preference to modes of cultural cognition and the cultural conceptualisations that languages contain. Finally, as I have tried to show in the applied sections of this book, I hope and believe this approach can significantly benefit human social life at a pragmatic level.

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